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METAPHORS OF BROTHER BOZON

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METAPHORS OF BROTHER BOZON

A FRIAR MINOR

Translated from a Norman French MS. of
the Fourteenth Century in the possession of
The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn

By J. R.

A Bencher of that Society



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INTRODUCTION

IN the library of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn is a folio volume containing, *inter alia*, a MS. work of the fourteenth century by one Nicholas Bozon, of the Order of Friars Minors. It is in Norman French, and is described by the late Mr. Alfred J. Horwood in his *Catalogue of the Gray's Inn MSS.* as 'a curious and amusing work, by an author whose name (Nicholas Bozon) is not mentioned by biographers. Nearly every section begins with a statement of the habits of some animal, or the qualities of some stone or herb ; then follows a moralisation thereon, and, after the thirteenth chapter, a fable or story is added.' The moralisations are supported by passages from the Bible, cited in Latin, and sometimes rendered into Norman French. The work is not quite unique, for

another MS. exists in the Phillips' Library at Cheltenham containing a great part of it, although not all, and there is in the Harleian MSS. (No. 1288) a Latin version of thirty-three out of the one hundred and forty-five chapters. A transcription of the text of the Gray's Inn MS. having been made by the late Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith, it was, in 1889, edited by her and M. Paul Meyer, and published in Paris by the 'Société des Anciens Textes Français.' In that edition the learned editors have collated and compared the Gray's Inn and Phillips MSS., pointed out differences between them, and corrected, and supplemented the one by the other. An admirable introduction by M. Paul Meyer is prefixed, the text of the Latin fragment is added, and the volume is enriched by notes in which Bozon's somewhat astonishing statements on natural history, and his hearer-catching tales are traced, when possible, to their sources. With the well edited French work scholars versed in mediæval literature and Anglo-Norman French must be already acquainted, but ordinary English readers unaccustomed to that

obsolete language may find information, and amusement from a mere translation into English of the Gray's Inn text alone. Such a translation I have ventured to make, in order that the moral homilies of a friar who preached, probably, to rustic audiences suffering from abuses of the fourteenth century and common faults not ended at that period, may be better known. Without appropriating the material brought together by the expert editors of the French version for the elucidation of their text, I have, nevertheless, used, with gratitude that her lamented death has prevented me from expressing to her, Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith's transcription in print, which I have compared word by word with the Gray's Inn MS. and found most accurate. The Biblical references in footnotes to the Paris edition have saved me from much fingering of a Concordance, and a vocabulary at the end has also been of some service. That edition is entitled *Les contes moralisés de Nicole Bozon Frère Mineur*, but I have adopted the title 'Metaphors' attributed to the Gray's Inn MS. by its Table

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of Contents,—although neither the word ‘Tales’ nor ‘Metaphors’ precisely describes the ‘Instances’ with which a good, plain-spoken friar enlivened his short sermons in the Middle Ages.

J. R.

P R E F A C E

OF Nicholas Bozon nothing more seems to be known than the fact, stated at the end of a list of subjects in the ‘Metaphors,’ that he was a Friar Minor. From allusions in this work, it may be inferred that he wrote in the first half of the fourteenth century, and not earlier than 1320 A.D. The name Bozon is found in our records of that period. It may be derived from the word ‘buson’ or ‘buzon,’ the exact meaning of which has puzzled writers on ancient law. As a proper name it appears in Somersetshire during the reigns of Henry III., Edward II., and Edward III. (see Somerset Record Society, vol. ii. p. 438, vol. xii. pp. 33, 34, 43, 45, vol. xiv. p. 181), but spelt in various ways. There was an old family of that name at Wissengsit, Norfolk, and Simon Bozon was prior of Norwich in A.D. 1344, and Thomas Bozon in 1471 (see Dugdale’s *Monasticon*, vol. iv. p. 7).

The MS. hereinafter translated formerly belonged to a community of Friars Minors at Chester to whom it had been given by Conewey, described as ‘minister,’ and therefore, perhaps, the provincial of the Order, but has been in the possession of the Society of Gray’s Inn from some unknown

date, certainly prior to A.D. 1697. The text of the MS. published in *Les contes moralisés* is, as I have said, the result of a careful collation with the Cheltenham MS. and is corrected and amplified in many places by it. Both seem to be copies of some original now lost. As, however, my undertaking is to make a translation of the Gray's Inn MS. only, and the majority of the additions from the other MS. are supplementary words seldom elucidating their context, and sometimes weakening the style of it, I have used but a few, and those only which fill some gaps affecting the sense of the passages in which they occur. My translation is crude and almost literal, in order that the quaint simplicity of the author's diction may, if possible, be reproduced.¹

Bozon's practice in citing the Bible to support his short homilies varied. He generally gives a free rendering of the Vulgate into Norman French, and then the Latin text. Sometimes he omits the Latin. His references to book, chapter, and verse of the Bible are sometimes incorrect, and seldom precise. Most of them, however, have been tracked down by the editors of the French edition, of whose labour in this respect I have availed myself, although I have verified every reference. Some

¹ My best thanks are given to the Masters of the Bench of Gray's Inn for entrusting me with the charge of their valuable MS. that I might beguile a time of convalescence from illness by translating it.

passages cited by Bozon from the Vulgate differ from the English text in our Authorised Version. I have, however, as a general rule with a few necessary exceptions, given the translation in our Authorised Version of the passages to which he refers, that they may be more easily recognised, and, in order to avoid unnecessary repetition, omitted his Norman French rendering of the Latin text when the Latin is also set out by him. Words and figures not in the Gray's Inn MS. I have placed within angular brackets.

A few of his quotations cannot be found by me, and appear to be garbled, or even unlikely to be Biblical. Some of the Metaphors are Fables of *Æsop*, *Phædrus*, etc. Several of the subjects are from the poem *Le Bestiaire* of Guillaume le Clerc, and amongst the illustrations of the MS. called *Queen Mary's Psalter*, which have been lately published by the British Museum. The sources of many others are in mediæval works such as Isidore's *Etymology*, *Gesta Romanorum*, *Marie de France*, *Bartholomew de Glanville*, *De proprietatibus rerum*, etc., and have been discovered by the editors of *Les contes moralisés*, and indicated by their illuminating Notes, which students of the literature of the Middle Ages would read with delight, but which I ought not to borrow. I must, however, take from the scholarly introduction to that volume an appreciation of

Bozon, by M. Paul Meyer, in French contrasting vividly with the language of the long bygone Friar, but it shall be here reduced to English: 'His preaching has a popular character, his ethics are suited to the intelligence and spiritual needs of laymen. Bozon is neither a theologian nor a logician, less still, although a Franciscan, a mystic. He does not seek at all to explain the Bible, but applies himself to give rules for the conduct of life. Like many preachers, his predecessors, or his contemporaries, he proceeds by way of allegorical exposition, but his allegories . . . are drawn not from the Bible but from natural history—from a natural history altogether fantastic, and so much the more fit to prick the curiosity, and keep the attention of plain folk. . . . He is an honest monk, although a little vulgar, who has a certain experience of the society of his time, and judges it in a narrow, and malevolent manner. His book is, however, most interesting. It has the character of attractive sincerity. Evidently it is a book which has been preached, and doubtless more than once, before being written. There is not in all Anglo-Norman literature a second work which can give us such a complete idea of what popular preaching was in England, and at the beginning of the fourteenth century.'

[C O N T E N T S¹]

1. Of the remedy against the fall.
2. Against advocates, lawyers, and jurors.
3. Of justice, truth, judgment, and equity.
4. That bad prelates oppress humble subjects and spare the shrewd and cunning.
5. That stewards may be advocates of the poor against wicked and unjust lords.
6. Of bad and unfair lords.
7. Against strained consciences.
8. That flattering words belittle merits and virtues.
9. That the Lord withdrawing from a man, hatred is aroused against him.
10. Of the old failing, and the young getting on.
11. Against the proud and contrary.
12. Against the rich despoiling the poor.
13. Against the angry.
14. Of the patient.
15. Against stupid servants desiring different masters.
16. Of the sons of nobles failing, and the sons of commoners getting on.

¹ This Table of Contents is in Latin, as are also the Titles of Chapters to which they refer. They differ in a few places.

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17. That the low born,¹ although educated, have low behaviour.
18. Against despising neighbours.
19. That neither sons nor servants are to be spared.
20. Against ill gainers.
21. That the society of women be fled.
22. That the devil hunts souls with his accursed hounds.
23. That the rich, and prelates seek out cases against subjects.
24. That the rich are fattened from the labour of the poor, and therefore toil not.
25. Of directing intention aright.
26. That the bitterness of the world pleases many, and the Word of God displeases.
27. That we should rise in the morning and gladly hear the Word of God.
28. As a man lacks age so is he lavish of wealth.
29. Of the perilous passage of this world.
30. That amidst flattering words we should hasten off elsewhere.
31. That those whom God chastens by adversity he crowns with glory.
32. Of the opposition of body and of soul.
33. Of penance.
34. That lords may be kind to humble subjects and stern to rebels.

¹ ‘Nobiles’ here, but the word ‘ignobiles’ in chap. 17 is evidently right, and is adopted in this place as a correction.

35. That the good, if they offend, speedily reform, and the bad persevere longer in wickedness.
36. That all good is to be ascribed to the Lord.
37. That what pleases is easily heard, and what displeases nowise.
38. That the burthens of each other are to be borne mutually.
39. Against the wanton.
40. That what is learnt in youth remains in age.
41. Against the malicious.
42. That ill gain is given up but the cost remains.
43. That worldly joy blinds many.
44. That the Lord loves those whom he chides and chastens.
45. That those cannot perish whom the blessed Virgin has willed to be saved.
46. Against the covetous.
47. That sweetness of words deceives many.
48. Of gratitude.
49. That the company of the wicked is to be shunned.
50. That the company of the rich is to be shunned by the poor.
51. That Christ is like the pelican.
52. Of the variableness of men and favour of jurors.
53. That younger adorned women are to be shunned.
54. Of the power of women.
55. That the wicked support the wicked mutually.
56. That good superiors desire a good household, and bad a bad one.

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57. That the memory of the passion of the Lord soothes penance.
58. Of confession and contrition.
59. How the wickedness of the ill-disposed is lessened.
60. That fools despising wisdom embrace folly.
61. That our hope is to be fixed in Christ alone.
62. That we ought not to contend against Christ, but to hope in his mercy.
63. Against those disdaining to do penance here.
64. Against those inflamed by desire.
65. That words to the foolish should be spared.
66. Against the wanton and malicious.
67. That many good things are tainted through one mortal sin.
68. That sweet words soften lords and bailiffs.
69. That good be desired and vainglory avoided.
70. That the stronger are humbler, and the weak less worthy.
71. That the words of fools are to be held cheap by the wise and discreet.
72. That the rich give meanly and seldom.
73. That the good ought to aid the falsely oppressed and undeservedly slandered.
74. That in straits a friend is seldom found.
75. That we ought not to seek higher things for ourselves.
76. Against hypocrites.
77. Against detractors.
78. That no earthly pain can be compared with the pains of Christ.

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79. That Christ will not be able to forget sinners.
80. Of the pity of God, and of the glorious Virgin.
81. That souls in purgatory are freed through masses and alms.
82. That worldly love soon vanishes after death.
83. That many are good in one [respect] and fail in another.
84. That saints and those to be saved are tried through various adversity.
85. Of weighing human frailty and liberality of heart.
86. Of remedies against sin.
87. That the vanity of the world is despised by the wise and embraced by the foolish.
88. Against greed.
89. That self-will is to be avoided.
90. That heavenly joy is reached through many tribulations.
91. That the rich are impoverished through bad lords, and therefore they are to be avoided.
92. Of chastity being held the truest medicine.
93. Against bad prelates.
94. That we ought to honour that for which we are much honoured.
95. That God tries his own, and upholds the wicked that they may turn.
96. Against the covetous and unjust.
97. That it is not safe to consort with a woman alone.
98. That worldly joys displease saints, and adversities please them.
99. Against bad bailiffs and stewards.

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100. That those raised from naught much lean to injustice.
101. That many keep tight hold of much, to the advantage of others.
102. That many nobles degenerate.
103. That the devil wounds many through mortal sin acquiring earthly possessions unjustly.
104. That power makes many bold.
105. That the devil deceives and seduces very many through worldly power.
106. That confession is to be made oftener.
107. That the words of many are contrary to their deeds.
108. That the devil deceives many by suggestion, practice, and habit.
109. Of the remedy against devilish temptations.
110. That the devil blinds many in manifold ways and entices them from sin to sin.
111. How the sinner ought to recover from sins.
112. Against envious evil-speakers.
113. That remembrance of the Passion of the Lord is needed against devilish temptations.
114. Against boasters.
115. A wholesome remedy against pride.
116. That the holy Cross is a remedy¹ for good Christians.
117. Against the greedy and rich.
118. A moral Fable against the greedy and wealthy.
119. Against the rich.

¹ ‘Refuge.’ See chap. 116.

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120. Of exercising charity towards the poor.
121. That some never do well in the present, and therefore are drawn to hell.
122. Against cowardly subjects, and prelates.
123. Against evil-speakers, and the unjust.
124. That we excuse defects in kindred.
125. Of the bad training of sons.
126. Against those who bring harm on next of kin more than on strangers.
127. That next of kin should be spared rather than strangers.
128. That sons be well taught.
129. Of avoiding bad company.
130. Against ambitious and unjust judges.
131. That bad servants do what they are ordered against their will.
132. Against those eagerly amassing for heirs.
133. That the intent be ordered aright, and flattering or disparaging words be disregarded.
134. That we mind not the acts of others, but weigh our own acts.
135. Of keeping wedlock faithfully.
136. Of preserving widowhood chastely.
137. That those who wish to preserve widowhood chastely ought to withdraw themselves afar from the sight of men.
138. Of carefully preserving virginity.
139. That virgins are corrupted through the counsel of shameless old women.

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140. That the training of a son be given in youth, and
of those who [n]ever wish to get on.
141. That some in youth soon begin to do well.
That those who covet all lose all.
Of fools who always lapse from bad to worse.
Of the good who always go on from good to
better.
145. That many laboriously get riches, and are mocked
by those who consume them.
146. That under the guise of virtue the devil often
introduces vices.
The list of Metaphors according to Brother
Nicholas Bozon of the Order of Minors ends.

IN this little book may be found many a fair example from divers things by which we may learn to eschew sin and cleave to goodness, and, above all, to praise God who, through the nature of creatures without reason, gives us cause to live aright. Wherefore, says holy Job xii., ‘ You who know not to eschew evil and choose the good, ask the beasts and they shall tell you, the things of earth and they shall answer you, the fish of the sea and they shall declare to you ’ [see 7, 8]—not in speech, but each in its nature differently disclosing—through some how you can do well, and through others how you can withdraw from evil.

1. Of the remedy against the fall of Adam.

THE noble clerk Isidore¹ tells us in his book xvi. that there is a stone called magnet, and this stone draws iron to it, but the adamant² is of greater strength, and, through its virtue, iron returns and casts off the magnet, and joins the

¹ Isid. *Etym.*

² In Chaucer’s *Romaunt of the Rose* the word adamant is used for the loadstone.

adamant and follows it wherever it goes. And this example may be applied to two things : first in a good signification, and then in a bad. This magnet stone that draws iron after it signifies the ills which Adam, our first father, drew to him, and those who should come from him, through sins more heavy (to have¹) than any iron ; but the kind adamant, of greater virtue, comes, and takes from the magnet its great power, and so makes the iron return,—as Jesu by his sweet passion vanquished the devil, and took away his prey from him. And therefore says our Lord, ‘ When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace : but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted ’ [Luke xi. 21, 22].

2. Against advocates, lawyers, and jurors.

THIS example may be applied in another way against some advocates, lawyers and pleaders, and the folk who are on juries. For this stone I have named, which in Latin is called ‘ magnes,’ is, in French, ‘ greyndur,’ and signifies truth, that surpasses everything on earth, as Zerubbabel said to King Darius. And this stone draws heavy iron

¹ Perhaps ‘and black,’ as in the Chelt. and Harl. MSS.

to it, for there is no cause so weighty that cannot be tried if truth may show its mastery, but the adamant secretly comes up to it, a very precious stone—that is a purse of money,—which makes the cause abate. Wherefore says Isaiah, ‘Judgment is turned away backward, . . . for truth is fallen in the street’ [Isaiah lix. 14].

3. Of justice, truth, judgment, and equity.

FOUR sworn brothers were formerly on earth, Righteousness, Truth, Judgment, Equity ; through these the earth was well governed, but now they are cast down by Covetousness—‘Mikelyerne,’—for a purse of silver can do more on earth than Truth, as says Isaiah, ‘Truth [faileth] etc.,’ ‘and justice standeth afar off’ [Isaiah lix. 15, 14]. Then comes Equity to end causes, and is repulsed at the door, ‘and Equity cannot enter’ [ib. 14]. Judgment sees this and returns and cares not to stay longer. ‘And Judgment is turned away backward’ [ib. 14]. Wherefore, he says, the simple folk who know not coveteousness, nor trickery, nor wish to learn it, to save their conscience, are often ill-treated because they have no defence. ‘And he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey . . . and [the Lord] wondered because there was no intercessor’ [ib. 15, 16].

4. That bad prelates oppress humble subjects
—spare the shrewd and cunning.

THE wolf, and the ass, and the fox were summoned to the court of the lion. Then said the lion to the wolf, ‘What are you doing here?’ ‘Sire,’ said he, ‘they have summoned me to your court for taking a sheep.’ ‘Forsooth!’ said he, ‘be off home, one well knows that it is thy nature to kiss sheep.’ Then said he to the fox, ‘And you, Reynard, so wise and wary, why are you troubled thus?’ ‘Sire,’ said he, ‘a man complained of me because, after his confession, I gave him penance, wherefore they made me come here to answer for this wrong.’ ‘Forsooth!’ said he, ‘they have little to do. It is your office to give penance after confession.’ Then the lion turned to the ass and questioned him. ‘Tell me, Sir Baldwin, what hast thou done? Why hast thou come here?’ ‘Sire,’ said he, ‘God-a-mercy! for taking a sprig of sage from a herb plot—for this much am I forced to come here.’ ‘Now, woe betide thee!’ said the lion, ‘what right hadst thou to eat a good man’s sage.’ ‘Forthwith!’ said he to the officers, ‘let him be first well beaten, and then flayed.’ So is it now in the world amongst prelates and bailiffs. They spare the powerful and stout, and strip simple folk—often

without cause. Wherefore says the Scripture, ‘A rich man beginning to fall is held up of his friends: but a poor man being down is thrust also away by his friends’ [Ecclesi. xiii. 21].

5. That stewards may be advocates of the poor against wicked and unjust lords.

THE nature and habit of the wild boar when he sees a dog, or wolf, or other beast approach his pigs in a wood or field, is to put himself before his pigs and whet his teeth and thrust forward his right shoulder, for that is stronger than the other. So let the stewards of great lords do who have charge of the poor, when they see their lords fling accusations against the poor to gain from them, let them then speak up for them and put forward the right shoulder—that is Truth, that they know, for them—to defend the wretches.

Truth, truth, makes black white. This they ought to say, but it can only be said—

‘For zif ye louerd bidd sle,
Ye stiward biddes fle.’¹

Hence many stewards would rather go with their lords to hell than speak up against their will to defend the poor.

¹ English in text.

Tale to same.

I have heard say that there was once a rich man who had brought up from a child a servant who much loved him, until this servant sickened to death and had to make his will; and he bequeathed his body to the graveyard and his soul to hell, but would not for anything, or for any of his companions, change his determination. His lord came to him and reproved him for his folly, and the other answered that he would rather be with him in hell than dwell in heaven without him. Wherefore, I say that many, for company, go with their lords to the devil through harshness to those they ought to nourish and support, for they reject the way of the wild boar and adopt the way of the bird called a vulture.

6. Of bad and unfair lords.

THE vulture is very cruel towards his fledglings, as the philosopher Pliny says, for so soon as he perceives that fat grows on their body he beats them with his wings, and pecks them with his beak, until they become thin. Then he loves them and claims them as his own. So do they if they use the beak to slander and threaten, and beat the wings of mastery and will, until their fledglings—that is to say, their tenants—can gain no fatness. Wherefore says our Lord through

Jeremy, ‘Also in thy wings¹ is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents’ [Jer. ii. 34]. Through the two wings of riches—mastery and will—are the poor put under foot. It goes on, ‘Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent’ [35].

7. Against strained consciences.

THE bear crawls up trees in the desert to seek honey that he so much longs for. And some one comes who watches for him, and sticks stakes round the tree and hangs a mallet by a string before the hole in which the honey is; the bear wages war with the mallet when he comes to seek his booty; he kicks the mallet away and pushes his snout into the hole. The mallet comes back on the bear; he is vexed by this and repeats it; it is repeated; and he so fights with the mallet that he is beaten, for he falls on the stakes and is done for. Thus is it with consciencie, when one wishes to have that which he ought not, and wishes to have it against conscience; but he cannot without a struggle, and he so struggles against conscience that he is shamed at last. Wisdom 17, ‘For wickedness, condemned by her own witness, is very timorous, and being pressed with conscience, always forecasteth grievous things’ [11].

¹ The Vulgate cited by Bozon, ‘In alis tuis inventus est, etc.,’ and he translates it en vos eles, ‘in your wings.’ But ‘skirts’ in Authorised Version.

8. That flattering words belittle vices¹ and virtues.

THE philosopher Pliny says, li. 8,² if the tongue of a goat touches an olive tree, however well it may flourish, it becomes barren ; and this is a great wonder. So is it with fools, who through their tongue, spoil many virtues, as St. Paul witnesses, ‘ Evil communications corrupt good manners ’ [I Cor. xv. 33]. And this example may be taken otherwise. The well flourishing olive tree is the man of fair life who can easily lose the merit of his good deeds if he yields to the tongue of the goat, that is to say, to foolish flatterers. Wherefore Solomon teaches us and says, Prov. i, ‘ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not ’ [10]. Here one may tell about the crow.

Fable to the above.

The crow carried cheese in her mouth, whom the fox met, and said, ‘ God ! what a fine bird you are, and you would be indeed precious if you sang as clearly as your father formerly did ! ’ The crow was joyful at the praise, and opened her mouth to sing, and lost her cheese. ‘ Be off ! ’ said the fox, ‘ I have enough of your song.’

¹ ‘Merits’ in Index.

² Chap. I.

9. That the Lord withdrawing from a man,
hatred is aroused against him.

THE nature of the goat is such that, when the sun withdraws itself and is about to set, each turns his back on the other, and lies chewing what he had eaten. And when the sun is about to return, then they gather together, and go to feed as they did before.¹ So is it amidst folk, when God holds him aloof from their hearts ; through resentment that arises from great envy, each withdraws from the other and goes chewing in malice that which he had previously conceived. ‘Conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood,’ Is. [lix. 13]. But then it appears that the true sun shows himself amongst the people, when each goes to the other, not only for food and comfort but for help at need ; for one will find many friends at table from whom he will indeed fail to find aid in great want. Ecc. 6, ‘Some friend is a companion at the table, and will not continue in the day of thy affliction’ [Ecclesi. vi. 10].

Tale.

Here may be told how a wise man offered his service to a great lord, and said that he well knew how to invite friends to dine with him. And when he was sent to do this function, he invited

¹ See Plin., *Nat. Hist.*, Book 8, chap. 1.

them to come with horses and arms. And none came save one only. This one he held to be his true friend. Eccl. 6, 'Nothing doth countervail a faithful friend' [Ecclesi. vi. 15].

10. Of the old failing, and the young getting on.

AFISH of the sea which is called crab has many feet. The hare has only four; the hare runs farther in one day than the crab will do in twenty-four. And therefore I say that many come forward and say, 'I have been such a time in religion, and so long in service or in another undertaking.' Some have not done so much in twenty years as others do in five or six. Therefore says Holy Scripture, Wisdom 4, 'Youth that is soon perfected' shall condemn 'the many years and old age of the unrighteous' [16]. 'For honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years' [8]. Here may be told how the crow reproved the bee about her age.

Fable.

The crow made great noise beside the bees.
...¹ Then said the crow to the bee, 'You

¹ 'Then the bee begged that the crow would leave off his noise.' These words are in Chelt. MS., and omitted from Gray's Inn MS.

begin soon enough to be rebels towards your elders, you are only one year old and I am fifty.' 'True!' said the other, 'but I have done more in one year than you in all your life.'

II. Against the proud and contrary.

THE bull has a very hard foot, and man has a very tender foot, and one man only is worth more than a hundred bulls. So is society in the world, or in religion; one can fast, and watch, and bear many labours, and becomes proud of this, and is rebellious and contrary, and intractable as the bull is. Another will be of no strength to fast, and watch, and to labour much, so is, perchance, rather pliable, soft in speech, courteous, companionable, and obedient. Therefore a humble man is worth more than ten or twelve envenomed with pride. Ecc. i, 'Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich' [Prov. xxviii. 6]. And said Elkanah, 'Hannah, why weepest thou? . . . am not I better to thee than ten sons?' [I Sam. i. 8]. Beauty, strength, sense, swiftness, wealth, subtlety, boldness, power, speech, learning,—whence the verse—

Si tibi copia seu sapientia formaque detur
Sola superbia destruit omnia si comitetur.

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By pride beauty was destroyed in Absolom, Kings 2 [2 Sam. xviii. 14], strength in Samson, Judges 13 [xvi.], sense in Solomon, Kings 2 [1 Kings xi. 4], swiftness in Asahel, 2 Kings [2 Sam. ii. 18], wealth in Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 4 [33], subtlety in Gibeah,¹ Judges 20 [xx.], hardihood in Eleazar, Macc. 6 [2 Macc. vi. 19], power in Holofernes, Judith 13 [8], language in Amon, Kings [see 2 Chron. xxxiii. 23], learning in . . .²

12. Against the rich despoiling the poor.

THE sheep and the goat go to feed, but in different ways, for the sheep browses resting, the goat moving.

So rich men take all; in Ps., They 'eat up my people' [Ps. xiv. 4]; the poor beggars receive what is given to them. They 'leave the rest of their substance to their babes' [Ps. xvii. 14]. Hence the Lord in the person of the poor man. Is., 'I am as the grape gleanings of the vintage' [Micah vii. 1].

13. Against the angry.

THE crane³ when she sees anything that displeases her at once lifts up her beak,³ and makes a noise unbecoming enough. Such is a

¹ 'Subtilitas in centum et decem de Gabaa, Judic. 20 (qui ita fuerunt subtile manibus, etc.,)': Harl. MSS.

² Both MSS. leave the sentence unfinished.

³ In Chelt. MS. the reading is 'sow' and 'snout.'

man who is angry. Wherefore says Is., his 'breath is in his nostrils' [ii. 22]. But a temperate and well regulated man takes example from the elephant.

14. Of the patient.

THE elephant protects himself with his ears against gnats and flying flies, so the temperate man lets flying words pass and makes as if [he heard] naught. 'They . . . speak mischievous things . . . but I, as a deaf man, heard not' [Ps. xxxviii. 12, 13]. Ecc., 'Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out' [Prov. xxvi. 20].

Fable.

The kite took an oath that he would never kill a chicken if it were not that the chicken gave him cause through evil-speaking, until at last he complained to the crow that he was very hungry. 'See there,' said the crow, 'where two chickens go. Enter into a matter of dispute with them, and some word will escape them from which ill will befall them.' The other did so, but it naught availed him, for the chickens restrained themselves well. The kite complained of this to the crow. The crow answered thereto in his English :

'Wel wurth suffraunce yat abatez strif,
And wo wurth hastinece yat reves man his life.'¹

¹ English thus in text.

Ecc. 28. ‘An hasty fighting sheddeth blood’ [Ecclesi. xxviii. 11]. . . . ‘make a door and bar for thy mouth. Beware thou slide not by it, lest thou fall before him that lieth in wait’ [25, 26].

15. Against stupid servants.

THE goat has so little understanding that he does not know of himself, without teaching, how to go to the wood, nor, at evening, to return by himself, how so often he may be led ; but when his goatherd has put him into the pasture he goes wandering everywhere. Therefore it is hard to find him staying in one place, and he seeks always to find better pasture elsewhere, where he finds it perhaps worse. So is it of many servants who do not know of themselves how to do what belongs to their functions if they be not always taught ; and what they learn once they forget directly. Therefore the bad servant is compared to the ass in Holy Scripture, because he is by nature a very forgetful beast and wants often to be kept up with the rod and often loaded with work. Ecc. 33, ‘Fodder, a wand, and burdens, are for the ass ; and bread, correction, and work, for a servant’ [Ecclesi. xxxiii. 24]. And as the goat does not know how to stay in one place at peace, so many do not know how

to stay in good service, but always seek to hide their bad qualities by often changing. And the more often they change, the better they become known for foolish people. As the lark said to the starling that he met on the sea : ‘Whither, whither?’ ‘Beyond sea,’ said the starling. ‘And why?’ said the lark. ‘For a dove that I have destroyed and shamed, whereat the doves are much troubled.’ ‘Where is the instrument,’ said the lark, ‘with which you have done such ill?’ ‘My beak here,’ said the other. ‘Forsooth!’ said he, ‘return, it is better to shame one country than many.’ Proverb. ‘A man that hideth his foolishness is better than a man that hideth his wisdom’ [Ecclesi. xli. 15].

16. Of the sons of nobles failing, and the sons of commoners getting on.

NOW the age is upside down, until the sapphire turns into mustard and the pebble turns into the ruby, for the gentles fail, and the peasants become gentles. The reason of which is that poor folk of base lineage follow the example of the Red Sea, which of its nature is not coloured, but takes colour of a rock, where it breaks, and rubies are found there. So do the poor; some put themselves to Court, and some to school. And what they have not by nature they get by

great toil [viz.], wit, and courtesy ; and they think of the words spoken by Isaiah 28, ‘ Through great labour is education to be got. Sola vexacio intellectum dabit auditui’¹ [Is. xxviii. 19]. And note then Is. 28, ‘ For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it : and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it ’ [20]. But the sons of great lords rely so much on their gentility that they learn less. Of whom some are like those who cry, ‘ mild mustard,’ which is made of rape seed and vinegar. This mustard is never most mild but in the crying. No more are those who are of bad bringing up and of gentle lineage. Wherefore, says our Lord, ‘ If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham’ [St. John viii. 39].

17. That the low born although educated have low behaviour.

THE owl begged the goshawk to bring up his son ; the other granted this, and told him to send him, and put him amongst his own young. So soon as the bird came into this company the goshawk told him that he must conform himself to his young, and learn their nature ; so the goshawk flew off to seek their food ; he returned and

¹ Bozon’s rendering of the Vulgate and the text itself is here given.

found his nest soiled filthily. ‘What is this?’ said he, ‘that I find contrary to breeding? Who has done this?’ ‘Your fosterling,’ said his sons. ‘Indeed!’ said he, ‘truly is it said in English, ‘Stroke oule and schrape oule and evere is oule oule.’¹ So is it of many folk who are born of low lineage. Although they may be risen high, often taught and instructed in religion, or in the world, or in dignity, they always return to their state, and to the nature in which they were born. Wherefore it is said in English, ‘Trendle the appel nevere so far he conyes fro what tree he cam.’ Wherefore says King David of these fosterlings, P., ‘man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish’ [Ps. xlix. 12]. And it goes on excellently, ‘This their way is their folly’ [13].

18. Against despising neighbours.

THE good clerk Basil tells us in a book that is called *Hexameron* that some beasts on earth are ordained by God himself for work, and are worth nothing to eat—as the horse and ass; others are to eat for sustenance, so are worthless to work, as sheep, pigs, fowls, geese; and there are others that are neither of use to eat, nor work,

¹ English in text.

² English in text.

but are ordained to guard and cleanse the house, as dogs and cats. Dogs guard ; cats cleanse. So is it in religion, and in each goodman's house, some folk are good for one function, others for others, and so one ought not to reprove the other, as says St. Paul, Cor. 13, 'But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him' [1 Cor. xii. 18]. 'And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour' [23]. 'And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee : nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you' [21]. And note all that golden tabernacle covered and protected by goat's hair curtains, Exod. 27.¹

Fable.

The peacock complained to Fate that he was very uneasy at heart that he did not know how to sing like the nightingale. To this Fate replied : 'Thou hast such a smooth neck, a long tail that hangs down to the ground, your feathers are so coloured, some purple, others blue, some like blood, others gilded—why art thou then troubled? Be satisfied with what you have.' Wherefore says St. Paul, Eph. 4, 'Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called' [1 Eph. iv. 1].

¹ See Exod. xxvi. 7.

19. That neither sons nor servants are
to be spared.

SOME beasts' nature is to be tame, like the lamb, others to be wild, as the stag and hind. And those that are wild may be tamed, and those that are tame by nature may be so left to their will that they will become wild, as I myself have seen in sheep that come from Scotland. So is it of children and servants. Some may be tamed by teaching, albeit of a strange behaviour. P., 'Thy discipline corrected me in the end.'¹ 'Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child ; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him' [Prov. xxii. 15]. Others may be so allowed their will that they will become wild and contrary towards those to whom they ought to be obedient. Wherefore, says Solomon, 'A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame' [Prov. xxix. 15]. Wherefore the Holy Spirit teaches us and says : Ecc. 7, 'Hast thou children ? instruct them, and bow down their neck from their youth' [Ecclesi. vii. 23]. But it is not to be forgotten that a beast is found that never may be tamed. It is called the tiger. There are now enough such that by no teaching will be instructed. Wherefore, says Solomon, 'crooked cannot be made straight' [Eccles. i. 15].

¹ Vulg., Ps. xvii. 36.

Tale.

A good man, old, blind, learned, and intelligent, had many sons. One amongst those was called Hichebon, who could not take in any learning, so that one day he read a lesson in Holy Church very foolishly. Then said the father to the child : ‘ You lie about God.’ ‘ Sir,’ said the others, ‘ this is Hichebon.’ ‘ Ha ! ’ said the father, ‘ let Hichebon say and do what he likes, for he may never be amended by learning.’ ‘ No one can amend one whom God has rejected.’ Ecc. 7, ‘ Who can make that straight which he hath made crooked ? ’¹ [13]. For as the tiger delights to see and regard his likeness in a mirror which, through craft, is put in his way, so fools look at no other mirror than that which suits their folly. Wherefore says Jesus Christ,² ‘ The fool will only regard the thing that pleases him ’ [Ecclesi. viii. 23].

20. Against ill gainers.

SOME beasts seek their prey by day, as the eagle and hawk, some by night, as the fox and the wolf, some by day and by night, as the cat. So is it now among people. The great lords, who are eagles and hawks, take their prey

¹ The text in MS. is ‘ Stulti difficile corriguntur ’; but in Vulg. Perversi.

² Sirach (?).

openly. Of whom Job 13, ‘The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure ; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly’ [xii. 6] ; ‘They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor’ [xxiv. 9] ; and Wisdom 1, ‘Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labours’ [v. 1]. Others search by night, as the fox and wolf ; these are robbers and lechers who do their evil covertly, as says Job 24, ‘and in the night is as a thief’ [14], ‘In the dark they dig through houses’ [16], ‘The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me : and disguiseth his face’ [15]. Psalm, ‘He that formed the eye, shall he not see ?’ [xciv. 9]. The others are they that prey by day and by night, as does the cat. Such are false folk that take from both sides but only give advantage to one side. Eccles. 2, ‘Woe be to fearful hearts, and faint hands, and the sinner that goeth two ways !’ [Ecclesi. ii. 12].

21. That the society of women be fled.

IT is the nature of the hare when he hears the hounds draw and cry, and the huntsman cast, to take to flight ; for he has no other defence save swiftness of foot. And he betakes himself

to this, and stays not, for if he gave himself up to the hounds it would be all over with him. And therefore he starts off that he may not come into the huntsman's bag. So some folk do, when they hear the hounds drawing—these are the damsels that go singing along—and the huntsman who goes sounding his horn, and this is the tabour that calls them to their danger—they then are off forthwith that they may not be taken and surprised. And this is the counsel of St. Paul, who says: ‘Flee fornication’ [1 Cor. vi. 18]. He does not say ‘fight fornication,’ but ‘flee,’ for it is hard by any other way to escape their hands, as says Solomon, ‘her hands as bands’ [Eccles. vii. 26].

Here a fable may be told, how the hare fought with the wolf.

Fable to the same.

Once upon a time a wolf met a hare, and said to him, ‘Whom dost thou serve? Where dost thou live? Why dost thou not come amongst the other beasts? Thou goest covertly, thou art a caitiff and coward.’ ‘Forsooth!’ said the hare, ‘if you wish to contend, I will beat you.’ ‘By heaven!’ said the wolf, ‘I should reckon thee a great fighter!’ ‘Look here,’ said the hare, and began to start off. ‘What?’ said the wolf, ‘do you fight by running away?’ ‘Yes,’

said he, ‘I have often done so.’ Wherefore, say I, if a man would save himself from danger, let him eschew the company of the foolish woman by whom Solomon the wise was shamed, and Samson lost his strength, Lot the renowned sinned so vilely, and the gentle Sichem endured death, by whom Joseph was imprisoned, and the brave Judas was trapped, by whom Sisera was betrayed and a whole line destroyed. Because Solomon felt his share, he warns us against the evil woman and says, Proverb 8, ‘Be not deceived by woman, for many are put to death by her.’¹ And he tells us how we should eschew such peril. ‘Keep ye far,’ says he, ‘from her company,’ ‘Remove thy way from her,’ Prov. v. [8]. Wherefore says Jesus Sirach, ‘Turn away thine eye from a beautiful woman, . . . for herewith love is kindled as a fire’ [Ecclesi. ix. 8].

22. That the devil hunts souls with his accursed hounds.

THE hare when he slips by the hunter takes rising ground as soon as he can, and because he does not see clearly before him, it often happens that he is held and entangled in the nets that are stretched in front of him.

This hunter is the Evil One, who chases man

¹ Query Prov. ii. 18; v. 5. Bozon does not cite the text in Latin.

towards sin. Of whom says Jeremy the prophet, 'they shall hunt them . . . out of the holes of the rocks' [Jer. xvi. 16]. Your refuge is Jesus Christ, from whom many depart through the hunting of the Evil Spirit who puts his net in their way by the deceit of his snares, as says the Psalmist, 'Let the wicked fall into their own net' [Ps. cxli. 10]. And you should know that this hunter who hunts after souls has four couple of hounds, some for one beast, others for others : Riches and Wilemyn, Havegyf and Bandewyn, Tristewel and Gloffyn,¹ Beauviz and Trebelyn. The first two are loosed at stags and hinds, that is to say Riches and Will are set on great lords, many of whom are by them hunted into the net of the Evil One, for Riches often puts a man off from truth and right, and through its great power he desires to have his will. Wherefore says the Holy Spirit in their name, Samson 2, 'Let our strength be the law of justice' [Wisdom ii. 11]. For all is right that we wish, since it will bear fruit. So these two coursing hounds, Riches and Will, hunt great lords into the net of the Evil One. And therefore says St. Bernard, 'If Will were not, Hell would not be.' Let them then do as wise men and withstand evil will, as the stag the hounds when he is heated. And let the rich take example by the Emperor Constantine, who said

¹ Perhaps 'Glozing,' conj.

‘It is more to conquer our evil will than to put a whole host to the sword.’ King David wanted to have his will against the advice of the wise men, and evil happened to him, Kings 2 [xxiv.], and to Rehoboam also, and to many others. Wherefore says the Holy Spirit, Ecc. 13, ‘Go not after thy lusts,’ lest they ‘make thee a laughing stock to thine enemies’ [Ecclesi. xviii. 30, 31], and to the hunter as well, and he has great joy when the stag before his hounds takes the way in front of his net, so the Evil One rejoices when he sees man take the way towards Hell, chased thither by vicious Will. And Isaiah bears witness of this and says, 9, ‘as men rejoice when they divide the spoil’ [3].

The third hound.

Then the hunter slips another hound called ‘Have give,’ that is to say, ‘Take and give,’ that is loosed at Abbots, Priors, Knights and Ladies having churches in their gift, who think in giving to give and take; to give a church in their gift and lordship, and, for their gift, to receive some advantage. Wherefore says Jesus Sirach, ‘God will reckon your gift according to the intent with which you give it.’ ‘Make way for every work of mercy, for every man shall find according to his works’ [Ecclesi. xvi. 15].

Those who give to the foolish and unseemly for

favour or their worldly possessions ought to give to good men of good life according to the teaching of our Lord (*sic*), who says, ‘Give to the godly man, and help not a sinner’ [Ecclesi. xii. 4]. To such donors of a spiritual matter St. Paul speaks and says, ‘Your hearts are not ordered according to God when you expect earthly reward in something which ought to be freely given only for God.’ And therefore says he, ‘May what you give or take by such gift go with you to perdition’ [see Acts viii. 20, 21]. This is ‘Have give,’ a fast running hound who hunts many a soul to Hell by his giving.

The fourth hound.



¹

Then he has another hound called ‘Baudewyn,’ loosed at pleaders, and at jurists, and at advocates, many of whom are hunted to Hell by the boldness of their mind, who through their wiles and knowledge proceed against right. Wherefore Job says, ‘boldly they provoke God’ [Job xii. 6²]. God is righteousness, and many of them take up the cudgel against right through the boldness of their tricks, and from this it follows that they take up the cudgel against God. Let there be now a purse full of money from the wrong side, and the right side giving naught, and you will see that the

¹ *Sic*, in MS.

² Vulg.

purse will draw the laws and decretals towards it, and will make the laws side with it contrary to the truth. Wherefore says Habakkuk the prophet, . . . ‘the law is slacked, . . . therefore wrong judgment proceedeth’ [i. 4].

And this hound Baudewyn—boldness of mind and speech—hunts many advocates, jurists, and pleaders into the net of the Evil One, as says the Psalm, ‘let the mischief of their own lips cover them’ [cxl. 9], that is, let them be cast down into the deep of Hell. It goes on, ‘let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again’ [*ib.* 10]. Wherefore I recommend him who is hunted by boldness of his tricks towards his peril to take example from the fox that he may escape. When the fox is quite hard pressed, and the hound running him comes up to his tail, the fox puts his brush between his thighs and makes water, and with this whisk gives the hound in mid face a taste of the bitterness of his water. The tail of the fox signifies the end of crafty and tricky folk, the bitter water signifies the bitterness of death. I recommend them to give Boldness some of it from this whisk in mid face, by which he may be at bay, and give way to them to escape. Wherefore says the Holy Spirit, ‘Ah! ah! how bitter is death to think on! Yes,’ says he, ‘not to all, but to those that are not righteous.’ ‘O death, how bitter is the remem-

brance of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions' [Ecclesi. xli. 1].

The fifth hound.

Now let us go to Tristwel, the fifth hound of the hunter, that is slipped at hares, of which so many are seen to pass the mountains—as are those ordained of Holy Church—parsons, priests, monks, friars, who ought by right to scale the mountain of high life, and, without the burthen of earthly goods, lightly pass the valley of this world. But, alas ! what shall I say ? Many are chased into the net of the hunter by Tristewell,¹ his hound that drives them at his will, because they trust in something which will deceive them. When a parson of £100 income has gathered two platters of scraps at his table to send to two poor men, then he thinks he has done much for God, and that he may have leave to put aside all the rest for his own use to spend in pomp and vanity, and, what is worse, in lechery, and on kindred, whereas the thing is granted only for the necessity of the clergy. Wherefore says our Lord to the prelates of Holy Church, ' You strain at gnats and swallow the camel.' That is to say, you take the bulk to yourself and give the worthless thing to the poor. ' Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel ' [Matt. xxiii. 24].

¹ *Sic.*

Priests, and some in religion so trust in their tonsure, and in the reverence folk do them, that if they have sung one mass a day they think that all the rest of the time may be given up to laziness and bodily comfort. And, what is worse, some bad ribalds so trust in their name of priest that one will come from his wanton and sing his mass on as high a note as if his life were ordered according to God. The Holy Spirit complains of this, and says [Eccles. viii. 14] . . . ‘there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous.’ And this false security drives them to confusion, as holy Job says, 21, ‘Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them’ [7, 8, 9]. It follows, ‘They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave’ [13]. This is the hound, called in English Tristewell, that hunts many folk of Holy Church into the net of the cruel hunter.

The sixth hound.

He has another hound called Trebelyn, that is to say, Usury, slipped at merchants, whereby many sin and fall ensnared to the devil. And this hound that hunts them is called Trebelyn,

because they will sell, or lend, or buy nothing if they have not treble profit. Wherefore the prophet addresses our Lord, and says in the Psalm [see xxiii. 3, 4], ‘Lord,’ says he, ‘who shall remain in your holy habitation?’ To whom it is answered, ‘he that does not deceive his neighbour¹ he shall abide with me in my house.’ But where then shall be the usurers who sell their souls for money? ‘Wherefore are the cities filled with usury and treachery?’ says the Holy Spirit, and answers, ‘Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for usury¹ and guile depart not from her streets’ [lv. 15, 11]. Alas! how the age is now turned upside down! Formerly, as we find in writing, the custom in the land was for hardly an usurer to be found in a city, and he who was known to be such did not find any one who wished to give him the kiss of peace in Holy Church, nor any of his neighbours to seek fire at his hearth. The children in the street watched him, and pointed him out with the finger as excommunicated. His house was called the Devil’s house, his corpse was buried in the field or garden. But now each point is reversed, for he who had refused to kiss his mouth in church, now kisses his feet, and he of whom one would not ask fire is now received to dine. Him whom children then despised and pointed at as excom-

¹ Vulg.

municated great lords now reverence and honour. The house of those who used to be in contempt now turns to the advantage of many—as they think. Now those who used to be buried in fields as, according to Scripture, reason required, are now buried before the high altar—to their ill hap, for their souls are chased by Trebelyn into the pits of hell, and remain everlasting in pain and ordure.

The seventh hound.

Now comes Beauviz, as to whom the hunter is sure that there is no beast small nor great on which the hound does not fasten. This is the sin of all sins most common in the world, that is lechery, it is in clergy and lay, in poor and rich, in the young, old, and middle aged. He drives many of each class into the net of the Evil One. Wherefore says Solomon, Prov. 7, ‘She hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death’ [26, 27]. Therefore let every one that is wise take care that he is not chased into the net of this hunter that is fastened with four cords. The undermost cord is the depth of hell, the upper cord is distraction, so that nobody can see well to persevere to the light¹; the third cord at one end is the flame which ceases not to burn; the fourth cord is interminable durance.

¹ Query this rendering.

23. That rich prelates seek out cases
against subjects.

PLINY, the philosopher, tells us in his book that the lion by nature bears hatred towards the ass, not deservedly, but through the desire which he has to eat his flesh. So is it with rich men : they find cases against the poor, not at all because they have deserved ill, but because they want their goods. Wherefore says Jesus Sirach, ‘As the wild ass is the lion’s prey in the wilderness : so the rich eat up the poor’ [Ecclesi. xiii. 19].

Fable to the same.

It is found in a fable that the lion made oath that he would not eat flesh all Lent if a beast did not give him too great cause for sin through what deserved death ; soon he was hungry, and much wished to eat flesh. So he sought cause for it. He turned to the right and saw a goat, and said to him, ‘What do you think of my breath ?’ ‘It stinks vilely,’ said the other. ‘Forsooth !’ said he, ‘you have slandered me.’ He assembled the court, and prayed judgment from the bailiff of the estate against him who had slandered him. The rest, to compensate him, adjudged the goat to death. Another day he was hungry and met a foal. ‘Sire,’ said he, ‘your breath is of sweeter scent than myrrh or cinnamon.’ Said the other :

‘Thou hast basely mocked me, all know well that thou hast lied. Therefore I shall be fed by your flesh through award of the court.’ When he was handed over to him, he met an ape in the way and asked him as he did the others. The ape was silent and said nothing. ‘What !’ said he, ‘do you disdain to talk to me ?’ By judgment of the court he was sentenced to death. So is it with great lords ; they will never fail for lack of cause to fine the poor. Wherefore says the Book, ‘The rich man hath done wrong, and yet he threateneth withal ’ [Ecclesi. xiii. 4].

24. That the rich are fattened from the labour of the poor and therefore toil not.

PLINY says in his book, x.,¹ that the urine of the male ass thickens and multiplies men’s hair. So also the sweat of simple working folk increases and multiplies the substance of the rich and easy. And therefore our Lord says to these, ‘Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours’ [John iv. 38]. I recommend then the rich and powerful to keep from molesting simple working folk, and think of what is written —that the righteous poor will stand up against the cruel rich at the day of judgment, and will accuse

¹ Query.

them of their works and severity on earth. ‘Ha! ha!’ the others will say, horribly frightened, ‘these are the folk formerly in contempt, see now how honoured they are amongst the sons of God! What are riches and pomp worth to us who now are abased !’ The words that I have said here are the words of the Holy Spirit. The simple folk now are abased by toil, and poorly paid, as often happens at the washing of my feet when I have been in gravel and worked hard, my fellow soon gets rid of the sole, and rubs well at the ankle that needs little skill. But at the day of judgment the simple folk will be exalted for their good deeds, and the haughty abased for their pride. Then God will do as the mender of old clothes does who turns the lappet to the front, and what was uppermost, downwards. The piece which bore excrement on it if applied to the nose, will, after the filth is removed, be adorned with gold. Wherefore says the Holy Spirit, ‘Laugh no man to scorn in the bitterness of his soul : for there is one which humbleth and exalteth’ [Ecclesi. vii. 11]. Note here how Jacob blessed the younger son with crossed hands, Gen. [xlviii. 14]. By this example we may think of two buckets in a well, one of which lies at the bottom, the other hangs above in the air, and the one above reproves the other who lies at the bottom amongst frogs, for his vileness—in a little

time after it will be seen that the one will go down and the other mount up. Prov., 'The rich and poor meet together' [xxii. 2].

25. Of directing intention aright.

THE noble clerk Avicenne teaches us through the nature of the lion how we ought to direct our intent in each good deed ; for the lion when he has to move anywhere always puts the right foot first. By the right foot, good intent should be understood that we ought to put before each good deed that we begin. Wherefore says St. Paul, 'Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God' [I Cor. x. 31]. But it is otherwise with the fox. The fox is of such a different nature that he puts the left foot foremost when he begins to move. And the reason is because the left foot is longer than the other, whereby the fox limps. So many limp in their intent, as says the Psalm, 'They limped from their paths' [xvii. 46¹]. They limp out of their path who leave the honour of God to please man.

26. That the bitterness of the world pleases many, and the word of God displeases.

A SEA-FISH called coytar is of such nature that so long as it remains in salt water it is well and happy. But as soon as it throws its head

¹ Vulg.

out of the salt water and the other water that falls in rain touches it, forthwith it turns belly upwards, and appears dying until revived by the nature of the salt water. For everybody now knows many folk whom the brine of this world in work and in pain well pleases throughout the week. But when it comes to Sunday and the word of God should begin to sprinkle them they turn on their belly, that is to say, they excuse themselves through their belly,—that the day is far gone, and they ought to be at dinner.

Fable to the same.

The cock found a gold ring on a dung-heap. ‘What is this?’ said he, ‘What dost thou here? I neither sought thee nor wanted thee—would rather find a grain of wheat than thee and a hundred such.’ So a short sermon more troubles many than seven days of the week in toil and bodily affliction. Wherefore says the Scripture, When God rained from heaven the sweet powder that was called manna the sons of Israel were all satiated with it and said they would rather be in Egypt with shallots and onions than dwell there with that sweet food. ‘Our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes [Num. xi. 6]. We remember the . . . leeks, and the onions, and the garlick’ [5]. But against this evil we have an example of good through the nature of another fish that the philosopher calls conch.

27. That we should rise in the morning
and gladly hear the word of God.

A SEA-FISH called ‘conch’¹ comes, by habit, of a morning from the sea at the time when the dew falls, and opens his shell and returns ; and that dew nourishes the gem that is called ‘pearl’ —a precious stone. So the folk who are in this sea ought by habit of a morning to go to the minster, and there praying and hearing the word of God, open the shells of their heart and receive the dew that comes from heaven through the great power and grace of the Holy Spirit, by which a rich gem is nourished worth more than any treasure, that is, good life, through which he is saved who without it would be damned. Wherefore says the Holy Spirit, ‘Fair son, open thine heart and receive my word, so you will have life through that if you keep it.’ As to which St. Peter said to our Lord, ‘Lord . . . thou hast the words of eternal life’ [John vi. 68]. And this no precious stone can do, as to which our Lord says that for this stone a man ought to give his existence. And we have nothing of our own except sin, and I ought willingly to throw that away to have this stone ‘. . . when he had found one pearl of great price,’ he ‘went and sold all that he had, and bought it’

¹ See Isid. *Etym.*, book xii.

[Matt. xiii. 46] ; as did the Magdalen who came to the preaching of Jesus Christ in Galilee and through the sweetness of his words conceived such grace that she left all that was hers, and led such a life afterwards as pleased God.

28. As a man lacks age is he lavish of wealth.

THE nature of the hare is such as this : when he jumps from his form before the greyhound, he first takes to the green road and then holds his course upwards until he begins to weaken, then he by true instinct returns towards the land from which he first leaped forth in order to die there. So it is of man. First he falls to the earth, as a hare from the form, in the womb of his mother, as Solomon says for himself and us all, ‘ I . . . fell upon the earth ’ [Wisdom vii. 3], ‘ and in my mother’s womb was fashioned ’ [ib. 2], then leaps out of the form when he is born, as says Solomon, ‘ and when I was born, I drew in the common air ’ [ib. 3]. Then one takes the green road—that is jollity in youth as children do, in whose name the Scripture says, ‘ Let us speedily use the creatures like as in youth ’ [Wisdom ii. 6], and then keeps the hill, always on the ascent, seeking honours and riches, and as the two greyhounds Blanchard and Perisant draw nearer so much the more he hastens

towards the ascent. Of these speaks Eccles. 3 and says, there is ‘no end of all his labour ; neither is his eye satisfied with riches’ [iv. 8]. Then when he feels that he cannot go on, at the end of his strength, it behoves him to return to the place whence he came, as says the Holy Spirit, ‘all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again’ [*ib.* iii. 20]. But the hare runs more slowly in descending than he did in ascending, by reason of his fork in front which is shorter than behind, that is to say, folk much hasten by gain to rise to wealth, but timidly, in descending, hasten to do any good when they near the end, as happened formerly to King Alexander, who so hastened to rise that within twelve years he was lord of the whole world, but on nearing death sadly experienced how ill all his gain pleased him. And so do many others. Therefore says the Psalm, ‘Likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others’ [xlix. 10]. And urge here two things : that they are called fools, and that they leave their property to strangers who will do no good to them but gladden themselves with the property others have obtained.

Fable to the same.

An old man once had a young wife. And, for the great trust that he had in her, he gave her all his goods when dying. And he prayed her for

God's [sake] that she would remember to aid him after his death. 'Willingly,' said she, 'if God wills.' The lord died, and the wife took a youth, agreeable, musical, and assemee,¹ and one day she sent a present of bread and ale to the priest to sing for the soul of her first husband. The other saw and met him and got the present back, 'I know how to sing better than the priest,' said he to his wife. 'Fill two baskets and we will go carolling. The old man was more careful for others than for himself, and I who am a stranger will do for him what I will do.' He is foolish who trusts in others after his life, and leaves his soul naked in order to clothe a strange skin. That is to say in English,

He yat hadd inou to help him self wital
Sithen he ne wold, I ne wile ne I ne schal.

And therefore I recommend that each one exerts himself to do good in his life and be wise to his own soul. And this is the advice of the Holy Spirit which says, 'He is to be praised who is wise to his own soul' [see Ecclesi. xxxvii. 22].

29. Of the perilous passage of this world.

THE nature of the ass is such that he much fears passing over a bridge where he sees deep water below. And we that are in this life pass by a very narrow and dangerous bridge, as

¹ Query 'seemly.'

our Lord says, ‘Narrow is the way that leadeth unto life’ [Matt. vii. 14]. And the water is so deep below that no one who falls will find return, as says the Book, ‘Neither was there any man known to have returned from the grave,’ Wisdom ii. [1]. We have very great work to place the foot wisely in such a narrow way, as says St. Gregory, ‘He is near perishing who does not foresee how he may escape.’ Let him take care how he conducts himself who would pass the dangerous bridge ; until it be passed, let him never care to look around him for castles nor for houses, to embrace, or kiss for foolish love, but set all his mind on making good his escape. So let us do that we can rejoice afterwards with those that have already passed and never more will come into such danger. For this the Saints in Heaven praise God and say, ‘Insomuch as God hath delivered us from great perils, we thank him highly,’ Macc. [2 Macc. i. 11]. But alas ! what shall I say ? Many forget their peril, and it happens to them as formerly happened to him who was sent into exile, as you shall hear told.

Fable.

Barleam¹ relates in his book that a man in the desert perceived that an unicorn followed at his heels, whereupon he got into a tree and kept there.

¹ *Sic.* But see note p. 239 of *Les Contes*.

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After that he looked towards the root of the tree and saw two small beasts, one white, the other black, gnawing the root to bring the tree down. Then he saw below him a deep pit and a large dragon lying at the bottom, and over his head he saw a sword hanging by a fine thread. And he who was in such various perils looked and saw near him in a branch a little honey to which he gave his mind so much that he forgot all three dangers. By this time the tree fell and he into the jaws of the dragon. This unicorn of which we speak here is death, which follows us day and night ; the tree is this world in which we sin. The white beast is the day, the black is the night, through which the tree declines until at last by their gnawing it will be cast down. The deep pit is hell where the hideous dragon stays ready to receive sinners. The sword hanging overhead is the judgment of God ready to take vengeance on evil-doers. The two drops of honey that we so much desire are carnal delights in earthly honours that deceive many men who attend so much to attaining to what they desire that they forget their peril and suddenly perish. Wherefore says Moses of such as are careless in such peril, ‘ Oh that they were wise . . . that they would consider their latter end,’ Deut. 31 [xxxii. 29]. That is to say, if they had true discernment in the love of this world they would find that very bitter which they now

hold sweet and dear. Wherefore says Is. 5, 'Woe unto them . . . that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter' [20].

On the other [hand], if they understood what peril they are in they would not be so confident, nor as joyous as they are. Wherefore says our Lord, 'if you had known your state, you would have weeped when you laughed,' Luke 19 [see 42]. Of whom many, as holy Job says, 'spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave,' Job 21 [13]. Wherefore Moses wished that they had foresight and might provide against the end. As Solomon says, 'Remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss' [Ecclesi. vii. 36].

30. That amidst flattering words we should hasten off elsewhere.

THE siren is a monster in the sea that partly resembles a fish and partly a woman. And this is a very dangerous beast to those who go by sea, for she has a very sweet voice. Therefore those who do not know her malice approach thither, and all slumber through the sweetness of voice, but to their misfortune! for she upsets the ship as soon as it can come nigh. This beast signifies the malice of this world, that draws many by fair speech to trust in their words, and shames [them], indeed, when it comes to that in which they should find profit, as once happened.

Fable to the same.

The fox said to the ploughman, ‘The hunter is pursuing me. Now I pray you, for God, that you help me.’ ‘Certainly,’ said the other, ‘go and lie in this furrow, and I will cover thee with my cloak.’ The fox however bethought himself that fair speech was not sure. When he lay under the cloak, thought he, ‘I will have one eye uncovered.’ On this the hunter came blowing his horn, and asked the ploughman if he had not seen the fox go by. The other pointed his finger towards the covered fox, and said in a loud voice that he had gone to the wood a little before. The hunter believed the hand more than the mouth, betook himself to the cloak, and said, ‘Well found, Reynard!’ ‘And thou art ill come,’ said the other. Then said the ploughman, ‘Do not at all accuse me, you well heard what I said.’ ‘True,’ said the other, ‘and blessed be thy tongue and cursed be thy hand. Thy tongue gave me comfort, but by thy hand I have death.’

31. That those whom God chastens by adversity he crowns with glory.

WHENCEFORE says the Scripture, ‘An enemy speaketh sweetly with his lips,’ and ‘if adversity come upon thee, thou shalt find him

there first' [Ecclesi. xii. 15, 17]. But Jesus Christ is of another nature, for he is hard to his friends in speech and shows himself gentle in deed, as was Joseph to his brethren, of whom the Scripture says he 'made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them' [Gen. xlvi. 7]. So did Jesus Christ to St. Peter, he spoke harshly to him when he called him devil, but showed himself otherwise in deed when he delivered to him the keys of Heaven. Therefore says Solomon, 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful,' Prov. [xxvii. 6].

I have known a rich man at court, when he spoke harshly to one who asked some favour he could be sure that his wants would be fulfilled. So I tell you truly those to whom Jesus Christ speaks harshly through hard lots in this life may be sure, if they have patience, that it will be well with their needs in the other life. And those whom he answers gently by sufferance of their will may fear that they will have great need elsewhere, as you shall hear tell.

Fable.

A holy man once prayed God that he would show him why the good are sorely troubled, and the bad tolerated. An angel of God came to him in form of man and took

him and led him with him. The first night they lodged at the inn of a good man who received them devoutly for the love of God. In the morning they prayed the good man for a guide. And the good man sent his son, who was very dear to him, with them. When they came to a bridge over a great river the angel of God took the child and drowned him. ‘Alas!’ said his companion, ‘why have you done this?’ ‘I will tell you another time,’ said the other. The night following they came to the inn of another good man who received them well. And he had a cup which the angel took away in the morning. The third night they came to the inn of a bad man, who, with great difficulty, granted them shelter. On taking leave the angel gave to him the goblet that he had taken from the good man. Then said his companion, ‘I marvel more than before at what you do.’ ‘Indeed,’ said the other, ‘now is the time when I will show you the counsel of God.’ The first man who received us well is truly one of God’s, and had no son save him alone who is drowned, whom God took away from him for his good, for he had too great love towards him, and began to withdraw the good things that he used to do. The other good man was besotted with his cup, and drank more from it than he ought to do. The third is bad, so will never have part in the kingdom of God. Therefore I

gave to him, for his inn, the goblet as a reward that was the occasion of evil to the good man. And therefore says the Book, The judgments of God are secret¹ [see Rom. xi. 33].

32. Of the opposition of body [and soul].

TWO stones are found which bear one name, called magnet²; but they are very contrary in nature, for one drives iron from it, if it only has iron near it, the other draws iron to it, and firmly attaches itself. So is it now between the body and soul—that is, the entire man. The body draws iron to it, by which you must understand sin, for inasmuch as iron is heavy so is sin, as says the Psalmist in the name of the sinner, ‘As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me’ [Ps. xxxviii. 4]. On the other hand, iron is black and so is sin, wherefore says Jere. of sinners, ‘Their visage is blacker than a coal,’ Lam. 4 [8]. And the wretched body loves such thing, and draws to it the filth of lechery, and the weight of earthly possessions, of idleness and of gluttony, with which the soul, by its nature, has nothing to do. Wherefore says St. Paul, ‘For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh’ [Gal. v. 17]. But alas! that the spirit is led by the flesh at its pleasure,

¹ Not literal.

² See chap. 1.

as once it happened to a foolish man who led a wise one to a bad inn, as you shall hear tell.

Fable to the same.

Once there were two companions, the one a fool, the other wise, until they came one day to the fork of a road. Then said the wise man to the fool, ‘Let us keep this way.’ ‘Nay,’ said the other, ‘but follow me, here lies the way, to the left.’ To this they went off, and met with thieves and were robbed and beaten and terrified, and they bound the fool hand and foot, and cast him into a ditch, and led off the other and put him in a prison, and for a long while kept him in pain. Then said the thieves to one of themselves, ‘Seek that fool that we left in the ditch.’ When the fool was brought to his companion, the wise man said to him, ‘Evil be to thy counsel, for through you I am hardly treated.’ ‘But,’ said the other, ‘shame on your sense and judgment when you rejected the right way for me, since you knew me to be a fool!’ These two companions are the body and the soul, the fork of the way is free-will, to take good or evil, where the soul often assents to evil through attraction of the flesh. Then they fall into the hands of thieves—these are the evil-doers,—and are despoiled of their virtues, and wrecked by mortal sin. Then is the body through death cast into a grave, and the

soul led to prison. Then is the fool quit of the grave at the day of judgment, when the dead shall rise again, and body and soul shall for their foolish agreement quarrel everlastingily. Wherefore says the Scripture that speaks to the spirit, ‘ Go not after thy lusts,’ and ‘ she will make thee a laughingstock to thine enemies ’ [Ecclesi. xviii. 30, 31]. Sampson, who was so powerful and strong, to please his wife, put himself to death. Wherefore if discord be between the body and the soul by occasion of sin, as this preceding example shows, I recommend that in this life concord be made, by the example of a stone which is called adamant.

33. Of penance.

THE wise philosopher Diascorides says in his book that this adamant stone¹ is of such great virtue that if a woman who is in discord with her husband bears it about her she can, through this very light stone, find grace in him. This stone signifies penance by which the flesh can give lightness to the spirit. Wherefore says Solomon, ‘ To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet ’ [Prov. xxvii. 7]. As the food of the soul is penance of the body. That which is bitter to the body, is sweet to the soul, wherefore if the

¹ See chap. 1.

body wishes to agree with the soul it must obey its will. We have evidence of that in the old law when Hagar fled from her mistress, Sarah, because she rebuked her and handled her somewhat severely, whom the angel of God commanded that she should return and be obedient to her mistress. The soul is the mistress, the flesh the maid that ought to be severely treated, as the nettle—if you handle it gently you will feel some pain, if you grip it hard it will not have power to hurt you. Wherefore says Solomon, ‘He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become his son at length’ [Prov. xxix. 21]. Ecc. ‘Fodder, a wand, and burdens, are for the ass; and bread, correction, and work, for a servant’ [Ecclesi. xxxiii. 24].

34. That lords be kind to humble subjects, and stern to rebels.

NOBLE dog as the greyhound is, he is cruel enough to wild creatures, but very gentle to tame beasts. In this way great lords ought to bear themselves, who may be courteous to simple and peaceable folk, and show sternness to those who are rebellious and contrary. And courteous King David testifies to this, who says in the Psalter, ‘With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward’ [Ps. xviii. 26].

So does the lion, which is the king of all other beasts—never will he do harm to man, nor particularly to child, without great occasion. But now masters are contrary to private persons, the wise, and friends, and courteous, and charming to enemies. So it happened to Herod, who slew his own sons and spared the others ; so do many. Wherefore said the sheep to the crow who sat on her back and tore her wool, ‘Over me you may.’¹

35. That the good, if they offend, speedily reform, and the bad persevere longer in wickedness.

IF a greyhound, perchance, begins to attack a man, he soon draws back and shows by his face that he is ashamed of what he has done against good breeding. But it is otherwise with the mastiff who, without reason, endeavours to continue his wrong-doing. So is it amongst people : those who are good, if by chance they do ill or speak ill, soon repent and cease. Ecc. 21, ‘My son, hast thou sinned ? do so no more, but ask pardon for thy former sins’ [i].

But the bad man, like the mastiff, always hardens in his evil. Ecc. ‘A fool will upbraid churlishly’ [Ecclesi. xviii. 18], and ‘he openeth his mouth like a crier’ [ib. xx. 15]. Note here how Saul

¹ English in text.

persecuted David, Kings 24 [1 Sam. xxiii.], and Asael, Kings 2 [2 Sam. ii. 23], and what happened further.

36. That all good is to be ascribed to
the Lord.

WHEN the greyhound has coursed well and taken his prey—stag or hind—to his master, he is rewarded for his work by what one will give to him. And when he has none of his prey he will never run another time. So is it, and ought to be, of each good deed that we do. We ought to give the honour of it to our Creator. We have the example of Joab, Kings 12, ‘And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters . . . take it lest I take the city, and it be called after my name’ [2 Sam. xii. 27, 28].

37. That what pleases is easily heard, and
what displeases is otherwise.

THE stag when he pricks up his ears can then hear well, but when he lowers them he can scarcely hear anything. So is it of many. When a thing is said that pleases them they raise their ears and listen well and fairly, be it true, be it false, be it good or ill. But when it displeases them they can hear naught, as the bishop who is

deaf when a clergyman asks for his due three times in a loud voice, but when he offers to give him his palfrey with a low voice the bishop at once thanks him for it. Ecc. 8, ‘ Kindle not the coals of sinners accusing them, they can only love things which please them’ [Ecclesi. viii. 13, 20¹].

38. That the burthens of each other are to be borne mutually.

STAGS seek their pasture in many countries by scent and not by sight. And then when they pass an arm of the sea each of them puts his head on the other’s rump—the strong in front. And when the one in front, weakened by the toil, withdraws, another puts himself in front, and so each is aided by the other. So ought it to be with us who are passing this perilous sea. But [to] the heavenly pasture that we seek—not by sight but by scent, and good hope of firm belief—each ought to aid and support the other, as the apostle St. Paul teaches us, ‘ forbearing one another in love’ [Eph. iv. 2].

39. Against the wanton.

THE stag when he is in rut teaches us to know the way of the lecher, for then the stag goes tripping and bounding, and spurns the earth with

¹ Vulg.

his foot. Ezekiel 25, ‘Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet’ [6]. ‘Behold therefore I will stretch out my hand’ [*ib.* 7]. And the stag is very jealous, and proud through jealousy, loses ability to feed, and grows very thin, and his flank darkens through starvation. So the lecher loses capacity for spiritual food, as says Solomon, Proverb, ‘The wanton will hear and it will displease him.’ [Ecclesi. xxi. 18.¹] And his mouth blackens through filthy and base words, as says Jeremiah, Lam. ‘Their visage is blacker than a coal’ [iv. 8]. And their fat of grace and virtue falls away, and they become lean, as says Jer. 4, ‘Their skin cleaveth to their bones’ [*ib.*]. But the stag when he has left his loves, then begins to feed, and recovers his fat, and cleanses his flank with dew.

40. That, what is learnt in youth remains in age.

THE stag teaches us to chastise our children, for if, in youth, before the horns grow, he be gelded the horn will never grow, but if afterwards, it is useless. So is it of the child. Wherefore says the Book, Eccl. 30, ‘Bow down his neck while he is young’ (an example from the twisted rod), ‘and beat him on the sides while he is a child, lest he wax stubborn, and be disobedient

¹ Vulg.

unto thee, and so bring sorrow to thy heart' [Ecclesi. xxx. 12].

41. Against the malicious.

THÉ cirogrille¹ teaches us the way of malicious folk, for he has poisonous water and seeks to annoy others with it, but he himself is the first who has harm thereby through his own water. Ecc. 37, 'Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein,' and 'whoso casteth a stone on high casteth it on his own head' [Ecclesi. xxvii. 26, 25].

42. That ill gain is given up, but the cost will remain.

WHEN the ape has two young apes he takes the best loved one in his arms, and the less loved hangs on his neck. But when he is so chased that he must leave one, he has to throw away the one which he loves most—for the other which hangs on his neck will not go. So is it of evil gotten things, and of sin. For it may suit to leave the gains, but the sin remains, and the penalty of the sin. Therefore says the Psalmist, 'When he dieth he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him' [Ps. xlix. 17].

¹ Chærogryllus, Vulg.: Lev. xi. 5 'coney,' Authorised Version.

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For a like example it may be told how the wolf seized a lamb and fled followed by dogs and sticks, and took his leave of the hedgehog [to escape to the woods. ‘Ha!’ said the hedgehog,¹] ‘Kiss me on taking leave.’ ‘Willingly,’ said the wolf, and at the kiss the hedgehog stuck to his chin. The other shook his head and wished to free himself, but this he could not anyhow do, in spite of himself he carried the sitter with him. The wolf is the sinner, the hedgehog with the prickles is sin that firmly attaches itself to the sinner, as says Solomon, ‘His iniquity is with himself.’

43. That worldly joy blinds many.

THE nature of the stag, as we find in books, is such that he delights much in music, so the hunter who wishes to trick him makes a man without weapons pipe or sing sweetly before him. And the stag goes on listening with great delight, and in the meantime the hunter comes alongside and gives him a dart, and turns his joy into sorrow. Thus is it with many folk that delight too much in this world, and take no heed of the devices of the Evil One. Of which Scripture complains and says, ‘Fools are drawn by foolish delights and take no heed until the arrow goes through them’ [see Prov. vii. 22, 23].

¹ From Chelt. MS.

Fable to the same.

There was once a King in the land of Greece who was always brooding and melancholy. His brother reasoned with him about this one day before many people. The King restrained himself at the time without saying anything. The next day the King privately ordered that the trumpet should be sounded before his brother's door. It was then customary in that country that it should be death to the masters of the house before whose door the trumpet was heard. Then he was taken and led bound before the King, with harp and viol and other minstrelsy in great abundance. Then said the King to his brother, 'Why do you not laugh to console yourself?' 'I,' said he, 'how can I do it? that am beset on all sides —four swords drawn on me, the point of one touches my breast, the point of the other touches my spine, and the two others touch my two sides. How can I then make good cheer?' 'You have said well,' said the King; 'and as for me, now is time to answer your question. Four swords take away from me the comfort of this life. Sin that I have committed, death that draws towards me, the judgment that I shall hear, and the punishment that I shall suffer.' Wherefore says the Scripture, 'Happy is the man that feareth alway ;

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but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief,' Prov. 28 [14].

44. That God loves those whom he chides and chastens.

IF a good man be hard used in this life and wonders at it, let him regard the nature of the eagle, and he will find matter wherewith he may be comforted. The nature of the eagle is such that when his young are well grown he considers which can look well at the sun and which not. And those that cannot fix their gaze on the sun without blinking the eyes he does not claim as his own and so casts them out of the nest. The others who watch steadily he nourishes with great care, first with blood and then with flesh. But as soon as he perceives that they are loaded with fat he beats them with his wings, and pecks, and kicks them to make them take high flight or mount into the air and follow his track who is the king of all birds and flies highest. So does God who is the king of all creatures. He watches the folk on earth that ought, through reason, to be the sons of God, those who regard the sun of his teaching —[by which man is enlightened—without lowering the eyes, and those who do not. And, because many have sight so weak of will that they cannot

regard the sun of his teaching]¹—which should warm their chilly soul, and light them in a way so dangerous—God, who is the flying eagle, does not recognise them as his children. Wherefore, says our Lord, reproving such in the old law, and it can be much better said in the new, ‘I am,’ says he, ‘their Father who has made them, but they have waxed fat, so they have despised me. As the eagle teaches her young to fly in the air, I have taught them what they ought to do, but they are unfaithful sons to their father. They have angered me by their foolishness and I will anger them by my judgment’ [see Deut. xxxii.]. Now let us watch how much in the world they look without blinking towards the sun of his teaching who teaches us to love truth, chastity, and charity, and to hate all kind of sin. If you speak of all kinds of devotion, who is there now that looks thither without blinking? So much has it covered itself from the brightness of the rays of this sun, it may not be seen, that is to say, that truth goes, through payment.² If you speak of charity, who can look on it for its great brightness. So of chastity, and the other virtues, so full of [im]perfection is their sight. Wherefore says St. Paul, ‘But

¹ The scribe has evidently passed from the first word ‘teaching’ to the second, thereby omitting the words which are here supplied from the Chelt. MS.

² This sentence seems corrupt in both MSS. They differ, and the above rendering is doubtful.

if ye be without chastisement . . . then are ye . . . not sons' [Heb. xii. 8]. But the others who fix their gaze on the words of Jesus Christ, which are the rays of the sun of Holy Church, are claimed for his sons, those he beats and spurns in this life, as the eagle his young to make them fly high and follow their father, as says St. Paul, 'Each son that he loves he chastens' [see Heb. xii. 6]. And Solomon says that he hates his son who spares the rod [Prov. xiii. 24]. And, as many children do ill if they are not beaten, so many would perish if they were not humbled. Wherefore says the Prophet to our Lord, 'Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord' [Ps. lxxxiii. 16].

As once happened to a man—

Tale to the same.

A man was quarrelsome with his wife and used often to beat her without cause. It happened that one day two men sought a surgeon for the King's sick son. To whom the wife, who was often beaten by her husband, said, 'I have a husband,' said she, 'a good surgeon, but it is his way that he will do nothing before he is well beaten.' 'Where is he?' said the others. 'At the plough,' said she. 'And how will he be known?' said they. 'By such a mark,' said she. They went,

and, as they found the peasant, they said, ‘Unyoke the plough.’ ‘I have no time,’ said he. ‘You shall do so,’ said they. ‘And what shall I do?’ said he. ‘You shall come to the court of the King.’ ‘What to do?’ said he. ‘To cure the King’s son,’ said they. ‘I—the devil!’ said he. ‘I don’t know anything of such art.’ ‘Now look,’ said one to the other, ‘what his wife told us is true.’ Then they began to strike the peasant. And he cried, ‘Enough, enough! I will do your command.’ But the peasant going along told them that he knew nothing of such art. The others raised the stick and beat the peasant until he granted that he knew the art well enough. When they came before the King it was ordered that he should be put at ease, and promised a good reward if he should work well in the matter for which he was required. ‘Sire,’ said the peasant, ‘by God’s grace, your people make me mad [saying] that I know how to do what I never knew how to do.’ ‘Sire,’ said the servants, ‘this is his way—that he will do no good before he is beaten.’ Said the King, ‘His manner is feigned, but, since he is such, give him what he asks.’ And the others beat him well. And he cried, ‘Enough, enough! for God, let me have life.’ So is it of many that are better off as fools than as honoured persons. ‘Man being in honour abideth not’ [Ps. xlix. 12].

45. That they cannot perish whom the blessed Virgin has willed to be saved.

THE nature of a bird that is called calabre¹ is worthy of remembrance, and recalls the benignity of Our Lady for this reason, viz., that if a man lies sick in his house, as to whom it is doubtful whether he will live or die, they bring this bird before the sick man. And if the bird looks at him, he may be sure of his life. But if it turns its face from him, he is but dead. And who is more sick than the sinner? But he towards whom Our Lady turns cannot be lost. Therefore said Saint Anselm to our sweet Lady, ‘Sweet Lady,’ said he, ‘just as he cannot be saved whom you reject, so he cannot be damned towards whom you look with eyes of pity.’ And this can be testified by many an occurrence. As to which, amongst many works of pity, I will tell you what happened to Sir Ralph Baron.

Tale to the same.

Once there was a knight, Sir Ralph Baron, handsome, and too much given to the folly of the time, until he was sick to death and ready to give up the ghost. To him came bad angels; they asserted their right to him, and the good spirits

¹ Caladrius, curlew or plover (?). See *Queen Mary's Psalter*, Introd. p. 34.

alleged the contrary. But all his foolish life was put in the balance, and the bad brought witness that he ought to be theirs. But Our Lady soon came to succour him : it was said that he served her, inasmuch as he found a light for one of her altars. The others alleged that she had no right against their claim. ‘Yes I have,’ said she, ‘inasmuch my Son granted me his life, through which he will amend, and by his amendment will defeat your right.’ The bad went away quite confused. And the sick man recovered and lived six years afterwards, and each day said his Psalter and heard Our Lady’s mass. He would hold no land, but lived from pasturage and foals, and his course changed for the better, and his life ended.

46. Against the covetous.

IN the land of Ethiopia a stone is found called crisopas.¹ And this stone shines very clearly as long as the night lasts. But as soon as bright day comes it loses its beautiful colour forthwith. So is it of the desire of this world. It appears fair to many who have no right knowledge of the Divine will. But when it shall come to bright day, when all will see the truth, then it may be reckoned folly, and folly may be reckoned great sense. St. Paul witnesses it and says: ‘For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God’

¹ Isid. *Etym.*, book xvi.

[I Cor. iii. 19]. As to which many are deceived, as once happened.

Fable to the same.

A wolf said to the fox: 'I have found a good and fine cheese as shining as gold; if I could have it I should be glad.' 'Good,' said the fox; 'show me the cheese and you shall have it.' The other went and showed him the moon shining in a reservoir. 'Now look,' said the wolf, 'a fine large cheese!' 'Do you much wish to have it?' said the fox. 'Yes,' said the other, 'more than to have any other.' 'Put,' said the fox, 'your tail in the water, and I will go to the other side to make it come to you; and when it is fixed to your tail you will draw it up.' The other did as the fox said; his tail began to freeze, and the fox asked: 'How is it with you?' 'Well,' said he, 'I feel heavy at the tail.' 'It is well,' said the other; 'now it begins to fasten.' When the fox understood that the ice was well hardened, he said to the wolf that he should draw the cheese to him. And the other drew, and his tail remained in the water. 'Alas!' said the wolf, 'now have I lost my tail and my cheese, and am shamed; now I dare not appear among people. At an evil hour did I wish for a thing that was not for me!' So many folk desire wisdom and knowledge of this world that is like the moon, and the shadow

of the moon, which shines in the water, for when you think to snatch it you will fail. While they are for gain, the fox asks them : ‘ How is it with you ? ’ ‘ Well,’ say they, ‘ we feel our purse somewhat big and heavy.’ ‘ Truly,’ says the other, ‘ yet hearken to such and such a method and you shall have the whole cheese, that is to say, all the town with the manor.’ But when they think to snap up the better, then they go without the tail of earthly possessions. As to which there is naught save grief, and mourning, and sadness, as says the Scripture that those will say after their days : Alas ! we chose that which was worth nothing, and we did not see the sun of right understanding. ‘ Therefore have we erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness hath not shined unto us, and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us,’ Wisdom 5 [6].

47. That the sweetness of words deceives many.

THE philosopher says in his book that there is a fish in the sea which is called ‘ fauste,’ whose nature is such that he sweetens the salt waters that enter his mouth, by which he deceives the smaller fish, who follow this sweetness that comes from his mouth. So soon as they approach him he forthwith devours them.

So is it now of many; by sweet words of flattery they attract simple folk to trust in them, but when it comes to deeds they find them quite otherwise, as happened with the ape and the bear.

Fable to the same.

The ape showed his young one to the lion, and begged that he would give him his opinion. The lion answered: 'So with your son as with you: of some profit—of no other joy.' The ape went off angry and came to the bear and asked what he thought of his fine son. 'Ha!' said the bear, 'is this the fair child of which they talk so much?' 'Yes,' said the ape; 'this is the same.' 'Let me kiss him,' said the bear, 'whom I have so wished to see.' And said the ape: 'You are my friend, and very well wishing.' And the bear took the young ape and devoured him. 'Ah!' said the ape, 'shame be to soft speech not in accord with goodness!' Wherefore says Solomon very wisely: 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful,' Prov. 27 [6].

48. Of gratitude.

THE wise man Pliny¹ tells us in his book that there is a fish in the sea, great in body and greater in gentleness, called the dolphin. When

¹ See *Nat. Hist.*, book ix., chap. viii., but no such habit of the dolphin as is here stated is therein recorded.

he finds a dead man at the bottom of the sea, he perceives by his instinct if the man ever in his life ate such a fish as he is. And if he has never eaten such, it seems to him that neither he nor his race have deserved to be eaten. Therefore, never through hunger will he bite into such a body, but by the gentleness of his nature will, with his companions, bring him to land. Ah, gentleness of creatures, without reason how you rebuke the wrong of him who ought to have discretion ! when man by covetousness, or by malice, or by envy seeks occasion to injure him who deserves it little or not at all, as did the wolf to the sheep.

49. That the company of the wicked is to be shunned.

THE wolf and the sheep washed their feet in running water. Then said the wolf : ‘ You have disturbed the water that was so clear before.’ ‘ Not at all,’ said the other ; ‘ you were above me, therefore your washing came down to me.’ ‘ Really ! ribald,’ said the other, ‘ have you answered me in such a manner ? I slander you ! You shall soon see what I will do.’ And he snatched the sheep to him and tore off his fleece. Wherefore says Jesus Sirach : ‘ What fellowship hath the wolf with the lamb ? so the sinner with the godly ’ [Ecclesi. xiii. 17]. For as the wolf

seeks occasion to ill-use the lamb, so bad men and criminals are always thinking how they can beguile and ill-use simple folk. And therefore I advise that they hold themselves aloof from those who can harm, and from the rich, so long as they want to have that which the poor have. As to which, small folk need to take example from the moon.

50. That the company of the rich is to be shunned by the poor.

THE moon holds herself far from the sun. When the sun rises in the east the moon keeps herself in the west, and when the sun comes into the west the moon turns herself towards the east. Let simple folk do thus, to eschew evils that may turn to hurt, as the mouse said to the cat.

Fable to the same.

The cat sat on the headland, and the field-mouse, and water-mouse, and barn-mouse—all three came on a pilgrimage by the cat. ‘Order, order !’ said the cat, ‘you are subject to me, I am your bishop ; come, take my blessing.’ ‘Nay,’ said the mouse, ‘I would much rather be here with thy curse than come nearer to have thy blessing.’ So it is worth more to many to be distant from great

lords with little damage and ill-will, than to have too much acquaintance that turns to their damage, and so they will never agree. Wherefore said Jesus Sirach: ‘If thou be for his profit, he will use thee ; but if thou hast nothing, he will forsake thee’ [Ecclesi. xiii. 4]. It goes on, he will say to thee, ‘What wantest thou? And he will shame thee by his meats . . . and at the last he will laugh thee to scorn’ [6, 7].

51. That Christ is like unto the Pelican.

OUR Lord says in a verse of the Psalter, ‘I am like a pelican’ [Ps. cii. 6]. And well may he say it, for this reason, the pelican is a bird in the land of Egypt, who is very fond of his young and well nourishes them. But the young are unnatural to him, for so soon as they are well grown, they give their father the beak in the mid-face, and the father puts them to death, and then feels such great pity that he has killed them that for three days he encircles them pitifully. And then he places himself amongst them and strikes his side with his own beak [so that the blood spurts from his side]¹ in which God has put such virtue that by this blood the young are revived. Then he becomes so weak through much bleeding, that he cannot help himself.

¹ Chelt. MS.

Then some of the young that are revived by his blood act naturally and maintain their father, and seek his food until he may recover ; the others unnaturally go their way and do nought else, but afterwards, when he sees those who have served him, and those gone off, he holds the one very dear and does not regard the other. Now let us consider what this may be. The Pelican signifies our Lord who was very tender to his young, nourished in Paradise, Adam and Eve, who so soon as they were [created, were¹] rebellious to their father. He avenged himself so strongly that he put them to death. After that he had such great pity that for thirty-three years he went sorrowing, and at last, in the midst of his young, he suffered his side to be opened with a spear, from which issued blessed blood that brought them from death to life. And so weakened was he by this that for three days he lay in the earth as dead. On which the natural ones sustained him, and the unnatural others only went off, but, in different ways, they were healed by him.

Tale to the same.

Once there was a man who brought up three sons that were his own sons, until his wife said one day, out of great malice, that he had no

¹ Chelt. MS.

right save to one only. Then he begged of his wife that he might know to which he had a right, but she would not in anywise say. The wife died, and the goodman gave his land to this child to whom his heart was naturally more attached. Then this man died, and great strife arose between the children for this land, insomuch that at last it was ordered by judgment that the body of their dead father should be taken out of the ground and bound by a cord to a stump, and the one of those three who could most deeply pierce the body with an arrow should, by right of strength, be heir to his father. When the two had shot, the third drew back and began to weep. ‘What !’ said the Judge, ‘do you not want to shoot ?’ ‘No,’ said the other, ‘not at my father. I renounce the land before I undertake such a part.’ ‘Truly,’ said the Judge, ‘you are his son and he your father.’ So our Lord nourishes and sustains in his house of Christians, three kinds of folk, as his three sons in respect of earthly sustenance ; one is open, the other secret, and the third without loss. The first is openly bad who only does what seems to him ill doing. The other is secret who hides his heart before people, to be held other than he is. The third is without loss who loses nothing, inasmuch as he is a good man and loses nothing—not even the time when he eats and sleeps—that may not be all

saved and allowed to him before God. But the two former are not his sons lawfully begotten in the doctrine of Holy Church, though he sustains them in his house, for they shoot at their father, of very ill deed, and says the Psalmist : ‘ Suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not ’ [Ps. lxiv. 4].

52. Of the variableness of man and favour of jurors.

IN the sea of the Nile, as the good clerk Isidore says, a great marvel of a fish is found that is called hippopotamus, which is now fish, now beast, at one time swimming in the sea, at another time wandering on land ; at one time he eats corn as a horse, at another time swallows the fish of the sea as a whale, now he is here, now there ; to whom many people are like, who scarcely ever are in a state of firmness, but now are of one opinion, now of another, one time they affirm, another deny, one time on one side, another time on the other, so that one may hardly know where to have them through instability. Wherefore says St. James : ‘ A double minded man is unstable in all his ways ’ [James i. 8]. This appears indeed everywhere, now in assizes and juries, in the lay court and in Holy Church, where truth ought to dwell, but through

pliability is destroyed and confounded. Now has the age come to this, that if a jury is charged on oath, but the greater part knows the truth, one alone, through doubt, or through fear, or through favour, can draw them to the false side, so flexible now are their hearts. Therefore I would that people should do as good coursing dogs do when they are uncoupled, each goes hunting for himself, and so soon as one of them lifts his voice the others draw towards him. And if they find him speaking true, the others follow testifying to it, and if they find him false—in that he may have hunted a wood-cock or such other flying animal—they return each to his line, and have nothing to do with his cry. So one ought to revile him who once is attainted as false. Wherefore says St. Paul, ‘ You ought not rightly to keep company with such folk’ [see 1 Cor. v. 9, 10; 2 Cor. vi. 14].

53. That younger adorned women are to be avoided.

THE partipol¹ is a quiet and swift beast of gentle behaviour, but, manlike, is deceived by a little, for he is too fond of the leaves of the alder when they begin to bud in the spring. And as he is gnawing the buds of these leaves, he is

¹ Antelope—Chelt. MS.

lain wait for by the hunter, who gives him an arrow in his middle. So I tell you that many a man is deceived by the blossoms which show themselves on the head of a young woman. As to which many of those may well be called leaves of alder for they are bitter in word and deed, but the well-bedecked head attracts folks' hearts tenfold. And just as they perceive it, the Evil One gives them his arrow in the middle, that is to say, undoes their goodness by mortal sin. Wherefore says the Holy Spirit in the Book of Wisdom, 'Turn away thine eye from a beautiful woman . . . for many have been deceived by the beauty of a woman' [Ecclesi. ix. 8].

Fable to the same.

A man complained to his neighbour that his cat would not stay at home. 'No?' said the other 'shorten her tail and cut her ears, and singe her fur, and she will stay at home.' So I say to you of women, should they be foolish, shorten their tails, or disarray their heads and discolour their clothes, they will not be then so much desired by folk.

To the same.

The birds said in their Parliament that, since the eagle was their king, he might wish to have a companion for his needs. And they sent to the owl that she might come to the Parliament. The

owl asked of the messengers why she was sent for. The others said, 'To be queen.' 'And do you know,' said she, 'for what reason I was chosen more than another?' 'Yes,' said the messengers, 'for your large head.' 'Yes?' said she, 'so God help me! if my head were plucked it would be as small as yours.' This example is evident enough.

54. Of the power of women.

THERE is a fish in the sea which is called 'affor,'¹ it is scarcely half a foot long. And it is of such a nature that if it be fixed to a ship full of people, the ship will remain at rest without proceeding—not by the strength which is in the fish, but by the nature which God has given to it. Such is the nature of woman: however small of body and feeble in strength she may be, nevertheless she is great in efficacy, for let the lord to whom she is allied be ever so great, he will be withheld and distracted by her from his good intent. As to which we find it written that King Darius lay in his bed and could not sleep. Then he had his three chamberlains called to give their verdict—what thing had the mastery on earth over all things. The first said, 'The King has the mastery on earth, over all things, insomuch as no man dare go contrary to his commands. The

¹ Isid. *Etym.*, book xii.

other said that wine had the mastery, insomuch as wine, through drunkenness, masters king and noble, and puts many to death through strife, and makes them forget divine promise and makes a man lose his speech. The third called Zerubbal, the son of Salathiel, who was of the people of Israel said, ‘ Fair Lord hearken now to me. Strong is the King, stronger is wine but—woman makes man cast off father and mother, and woman makes the disloyal become loyal. Woman makes the coward bold. Woman stays at home and takes her ease, while her husband toils by sea and land, and on his return is very eager to please his wife [see 1 Esdras iii. 3, 4].

55. That the wicked support the wicked reciprocally.

THE book of nature tells us that the black crow is very useful, and especially to the fox, to whose aid he comes when he sees that he is attacked by badger or bird. Such is the way of folk, that each one doing ill, has another aiding in it ; so the lord of the mansion or bishop of holy Church or inquisitor, who may come into the country wishing faithfully to try a complaint made against bailiffs or servants, cannot come to a head because each gets his friends to aid the other. And this,

holy Job witnesses. ‘They stick together, that they cannot be sundered’ [Job xli. 17].

Fable to the same.

The lion held his court, and the sheep came and complained of the wolf that he had taken away his lamb. Then said the lion to the wolf : ‘How will you clear yourself of this report ?’ ‘Sir,’ said he, ‘I rely on my neighbours.’ ‘And who are they ?’ said the lion. ‘Sir,’ said he, ‘the fox and the crow and the mastiff.’ These three were sent for and sworn to tell the truth. ‘Sir,’ said they, ‘by the oath that we have taken, the wolf is wise and gentle and righteous in his deeds.’ ‘Truly !’ said the sheep in his English ; ‘schrewe on, schrewe oyer.¹ Truly have they spoken ; he is gentle as regards them.’ Of another’s hide—liberal currying ; when the wolf had taken what had pleased him, then came the fox quite ready, and the crow no slower, nor the mastiff, to take his share. Of which they would have lost much if one such ill-doer had been confounded.

56. That good superiors desire a good household, and bad a bad one.

LOADSTONE is a precious stone that draws iron to it, and gagaz² is another stone which draws straw to it, and they signify the great

¹ English text = One bad, other bad.

² Isid. *Etym.*, book xvi.

landlords, of whom some draw to them the steadfast folk, loyal, and of good counsel, the others draw towards them straw, the crazy and silly and rascals, as did the hare chosen for magistrate. Then his friends said that he would do well to take to himself good counsel and good company. ‘ You should take,’ said they, ‘ an ox because he is strong, and a horse because he is of good courage, and a greyhound because he is gentle and well-running.’ ‘ Forsooth ! ’ said the other, ‘ have you said all ? Of those that you have named, I can make but little, for the ox is too butting, and the horse too kicking, and the greyhound too snarling, but I will betake myself to the young ape, and to the kitten, and to the kid.’ So do the great lords ; they have naught to do with the ox that butts them out of their project, nor with the horse that spurns with his hoof—that is to say, with a man who loves truth, nor with the biting hound, that is to say, with the man who scolds their folly, but all ever betake themselves to the kitten—to crazy folk who follow their foolishness and will, and to the young ape that makes them laugh vainly, and to the kids who are connected with them by relationship. Wherefore said Solomon, ‘ What manner of man the ruler of the city is, such are all they that dwell therein ’ [Ecclesi. x. 2].

57. That the memory of the incarnation¹
of the Lord soothes penance.

IF one has in his body dead flesh, or a wound that ought to be burnt or cut, and wishes to escape without feeling pain so long as that treatment lasts, let him take a root of a herb that is called mandrake which bears resemblance to a man, and have it cooked in sweet wine. And when he shall have drunk of this beverage he can sleep so sound, that one can do to him what one likes without his feeling hurt. And who is there now in this life, man or woman of full age, who may not have in him the dead flesh or wound of some sin? It behoves him, by all means, if he would be healed, to be previously purged by burning of penance, or of some other pain that he has to bear. But whoso wishes to bear it well and to escape without feeling too much pain, let him take the root of the mandrake that bears the resemblance of man and have it cooked in sweet wine, that is to say, let him think wholly on the sweet love of him who is called the root and beginning of everything, how he took for us the likeness of man in which for so many years he suffered so many ills for us. And if we be well imbued with this thought, there is nothing which can hurt us.

¹ ‘Passion’ in Index.

Wherefore says St. Paul, ‘ Think of him who suffered so much for you that you may the better suffer for him ’ [see 1 Peter iv. 1]. As to which I will tell you what once happened.

Tale.

There was a rich man who was very charitable, but too content with bodily ease, for he would hardly fast on any Friday ; he would not get up in the morning, nor undertake anything that he ought to vex the flesh, but wholly relied on alms-giving. This man caught an illness so that he thought to die. And as he lay in a trance he deemed that Jesus asked of many of the souls which passed at the time what they had done in this world for him. ‘ Aha ! ’ thought he, ‘ I have a good answer, for I have given many alms.’ When our Lord came to him he did not ask at all ‘ What hast thou done ? ’ but what he had suffered for him. The other was silent, and then replied : ‘ I have suffered nothing for you, Lord, I crave your pardon, but I gave a little for you. . . . ’ ‘ Verily ! ’ said our Lord, ‘ what you gave I lent to you. But you never thought of rendering to me in your own flesh that which I endured for you in my flesh, but I will do this much for you on account of your charities, I will give you time to amend yourself.’ When this man returned to himself he praised God for this vision, and no

more enforced on himself almsgiving, but to do penance for his sins and to please God.

58. Of confession and contrition.

POWDER of hyssop with spring water cleanses the face of man. This powder of hyssop signifies confession, divided into small portions which makes the face of the soul very clear if it be well mixed with the water of repentance. As to which the prophet David prayed our Lord, 'Lord,' said he, 'sprinkle my face with hyssop mingled with water, and by that whitening I shall be found whiter than snow' [see Ps. li. 7]. That is to say, if with contrition in confession you absolve me I shall have beauty enough. As to which I [will here tell you a delightful adventure.]

Fable to the same.

A holy man once watched the people entering a minster to hear divine service, amongst whom one entered who had a very hideous soul. This man remained with the others at the minster so long as the word of God was preached, and, through this sermon, conceived in his heart great repentance of his evil, and had a strong desire to confess. Afterwards, when the people came out, he passed before the house of the holy man. But then he looked at him and found him all changed, for then

he seemed fair and delightful in soul. The holy man called him and said to him, ‘ Fair friend, God has shown me a great wonder in you. Just now you were very hideous of soul and now you are graceful.’ ‘ Sir,’ said the other, ‘ I beg your pardon ; I am a sinner, and repent of my sins and pray you for confession.’ By this case one may know that God is merciful and forgives the wrongdoing of sin, through contrition and desire for confession, as says the Gospel. ‘ The lepers going towards the priest are cleansed before they come to the priest ’ [see Matt. viii. 2, 4].

59. How the malice of the malignant is diminished.

A PLANT which is called the squill, so long as it is whole, is very poisonous, therefore one plucks each branch from the other and plants them separately, and then the evil is assuaged. So is it of bad company, each joins the other in evil ; it is not good to dally with the like, but it would be well that those who fear such company should separate each from the other and plant them in different places, and then their evil will be assuaged, as said the prophet Daniel of the two old devils who desired to have confounded the good lady Susannah, when they were separated

their malice had no power. ‘Put these two aside,’ said he, ‘one far from the other,’ Daniel 3 [see Hist. of Susanna, i. 51].

60. That fools, despising wisdom,
embrace folly.

GROUND ivy is of such nature as this ; if you make a cup of the root and have it filled with wine and water mixed, the water will go to the bottom and throw the wine up. Such are the hearts of fools ; they receive follies, and reject sense.

61. That our hope is to be fixed
in Christ alone.

THE dove is of such nature that she is never safe in town or country until she comes to her refuge. So ought we in this life always to fear evil and never to rely on any other thing but on Jesus Christ, in whose side we ought to take our refuge and retreat, as says Jeremiah the prophet, by the example of the dove, ‘Be like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole’s mouth’ [Jer. xlvi. 28]. That is, in the side of Jesus Christ. And if the Evil One,

through craft, wishes to withdraw you from your safety, think on the side of Jesus Christ that was opened to receive us.

Fable.

The fox passed under a rock, he looked up and saw a dove sit above, to whom the fox said : ‘It would avail you much better to play amongst the animals on the ground than to sit above, amongst the cold stones.’ ‘Forsooth !’ said the other, ‘you are not all my brothers, and I do not rely on you.’ ‘You may,’ said the fox, ‘letters have come from the King’s Court that we should all be of one accord and none shall do harm to the other any more.’ On this came a knight with four greyhounds following him. ‘Adieu !’ said the fox to the dove, ‘I take my leave of you, fair cousin, I dare no longer stay.’ ‘Will you do so?’ said he, ‘they are our brothers, think of this final accord made between us animals.’ ‘Nay,’ said the fox, ‘I am not sure that these dogs have seen the letters, for they are envious.’ So if the Evil One entices you and counsels you to sin through an understanding as to improvement, say —if he shows the letter that he has from God to give pardon for those sins. Wherefore says St. Peter, ‘God spared not the angels that sinned’ [2 Peter ii. 4].

62. That we ought not to contend against Christ, but to hope in his mercy.

As it avails a poor man little or nothing to litigate with a rich one, so it avails us sinners less to contend against God for our sins : if strength is in question, he is very strong ; if he wills to charge us with any trespass, we cannot answer a single word. It is much better to do as the Abbot of Westminster did, who sued King Henry about a fair manor. And when he perceived that his suit did not prevail he called Henry of Winchester¹ to his counsel, by leave of the judges, as his tenant of another manor that he held of the Abbot, and charged [him by this tenement²] that he should give him the best counsel that he could have as regarded the King. Then [the king²] gave counsel to the Abbot that he should make peace with the King, and the manor might remain to him. I recommend that we do this towards our Lord Jesus Christ to gain the right that we claim in the heritage of heaven, whither we shall never come through skill. But we ought to pray him by that tenure he holds of our humanity, which for kindness he took of us—not to farm,

¹ The editors of *Les Contes* point out in a note that Henry of Winchester was Henry III., and that there was a suit between the Abbot of Westminster and the monks, in which the king took part, referred to in Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*.

² Chelt. MS.

but in fee—that we may act by his advice, which he sends us by message and says, ‘ Make peace with me, make peace with me ’ [see Isa. xxvii. 5].

63. Against those disdaining to do penance here.

MANY folk are like vagrants who, through their misdeeds, are at the mercy of their Lord ; in the court where they could get off for a penny they give four or five afterwards through their own folly. We can now, by short penance to our Lord in this world, escape, if we will, long punishment in another world. Wherefore says our Lord, ‘ For one day of penance in this life I release you one year in the other.’¹

Tale to the same.

A King granted to his officer a penny from each man who was wooden-legged, or hump-backed, or scald-headed, or who had lost an eye, that he saw passing through the gate of the town. To it came a wooden-legged man. ‘ Here comes a penny,’ said the officer, ‘ Now pay,’ said he. ‘ I will not do so,’ said the other. ‘ You shall do so,’ said he, and they so struggled that he threw the hood from his eyes, and then he had but one

¹ *Sembla*, no such passage in the Bible.

eye. Said the officer, ‘Now you will pay two-pence.’ ‘I will not,’ said the other. ‘You shall,’ said he. The officer drew back the hood and then he appeared ringwormed. ‘Hey !’ said the officer, ‘you would have got off before for two-pence, and now you shall pay three.’ ‘I will not do it,’ said the other. ‘You shall do it,’ said he. The officer took from him his cloak, and then he was hump-backed. ‘Forsooth !’ said the officer, ‘now you shall pay four.’

64. Against those inflamed by desire.

THE mole, as the philosopher says, when it is dying then first opens its eyes that never yet saw. So is it of the wicked covetous ; in their life they neither see God nor believe truth ; but at death they will see the truth. Wherefore says the Prophet, ‘The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth’ [Ps. ix. 16].

65. That words to the foolish should be spared.

THE badger teaches us how we ought to mind and restrain our speech against slanderers ; his nature is such that when he is chased by dogs he holds his breath in his body as much as he well can, in order that the dogs may not fix their teeth in him.

So let each wise man do when harried by evilspeakers, let him keep himself quiet without reply, that the others may not have cause to kill him through a foolish answer. Wherefore says Solomon, Prov. 26 : ‘Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him’ [4].

66. Against the wanton and malicious.

THE hedgehog is a prickly beast dwelling in a hollow of rock ; his nature is such that be he ever so loaded with apples he will carry one in his mouth. So is it of the lecher, so is it of the trickster ; with all the load of sin that they carry yet are they not content if the mouth does not speak of vanity, which is the worst of all the rest. Wherefore says Solomon, ‘Fools make a mock at sin,’ Prov. 14 [9]. Wherefore ? Because they ‘rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked’ [Prov. ii. 14].

67. That many good things are tainted through one mortal sin.

ON the other hand, the hedgehog’s nature is that, when he is well laden with fruit, if an apple falls from his back he shakes himself and loses all his labour. So is it of many who through great labour have gathered many good things in

the soul, and lose all through a mortal sin. Our Lord witnesses this, Ezek. 33, 'in the day that he sinneth . . . all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered' [12, 13].

68. That sweet words soften lords and bailiffs.

THE hedgehog is of such nature that if one pokes him with a rod or stick he keeps himself all the more tight, and puts out the point of the spines, but through warm water one can open him out at will. By this we learn how we ought to play with people who are in power in a bailiwick or lordship, who through being provoked by big words will not be overcome, nor be stirred by threats, but will be overcome by water—soft speech and prayer. This appeared in Saul, Kings 16, 'when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul . . . David took a harp, and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed' [1 Sam. xvi. 23]. 'Speak unto us smooth things,' Is. 34 [xxx. 10].

69. That good be desired, and vainglory avoided.

THE ant is of such nature that she seeks no grain but wheat, and puts her gain in a secret place within her home to save it from wind, that it may not be carried away. And if perchance the rain touches it she dries it again in the sun. Such ought to be the life of a wise man—to

desire nothing but goodness. Prov., 'The desire of the righteous is only good' [xi. 23].

And what he gets in the evil moisture of vain praise he dries at the sun of truth, and afterwards puts it in a secret place that it may not be lost through the wind of vainglory. Matt., 'Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them' [vi. 1].

For, if he does, he loses much. 'Verily I say unto you, they have their reward' [2].

And if the damp of fleshly delight appears, it should be drawn to the sun that dries all ills by the ardour of its love. Eccles. 39, 'He turned the waters into dryness and the earth is dried' [Ecclesi. xxxix. 29¹].

70. That the stronger are humbler, and the weak viler.

AMONGST all beasts which go on earth the elephant is held to be greatest, and of all fish that swim in the sea the whale is held to be greatest, and nevertheless neither the one nor the other has any gall, as the Philosopher says: but the frog, which is so small and so nimble, as soon as it is touched begins to blow itself out and arm itself with anger. Plin. 6, 28.² So is it amongst people. We often find the

¹ Vulg.

² Query.

bravest the most humble and most good-natured, according to the teaching of Solomon, who says : ‘The greater thou art, the more humble thyself’ [Ecclesi. iii. 18].

And we find the less powerful more envious and proud. Of which God complains, and says : ‘There are three things I much hate : a poor man that is proud, a rich man that is a liar, and an old adulterer that doateth’ [Ecclesi. xxv. 2].

Apply each to each, and you may ponder on it well.

71. That the words of fools are to be held cheap by the wise and discreet.

GOD has given to the elephant such a nature that though he may be of such strength that he can carry many people well armed, and of such boldness that he dare measure himself against a whole host, yet he fears a mouse and shuns its company, but could crush the mouse with his foot. And why has God given him such a nature but to teach the wise however much they be of great power, to put away foolish braggarts and eschew their company ? For such are like the mouse who takes away from many a one his rest. Wherefore says the wise man to him, Eccl. 24, ‘Curse the whisperer and double tongued ; for such have destroyed many that were at peace. . . . Whoso hearkeneth to it shall never find rest’ [Ecclesi. xxviii. 13, 16].

72. That the rich give meanly, and seldom.

TH E nature of the elephant is to bear young once, and to carry it two years in the womb before delivery ; and after that once she never hopes to have more young, though she live 300 years as nature allows her. Isid. xii., So is it with great lords ; some promise largely, and when they give anything they give little ; and then it is not agreeable to them after paying to be asked for more. Whereof Solomon reprehends them, and says, Prov., ‘ Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain ’ [Prov. xxv. 14]. Ha, God ! how well he says ! for as the wind is messenger of rain so promise ought to be messenger of good gift. But many do as did the wolf who was choked, and promised the crane great recompense that he might cure him ; but when the crane had done his work and asked recompense, he answered him, ‘ Be well paid with your life, when your neck was in my mouth you were at my mercy to save you or kill you.’

73. That the good ought to aid the falsely oppressed and undeservedly slandered.

TH E elephant, as the book says, cannot rest lying down ; he provides himself with a tree where he can support himself and

sleep standing. Then one comes who knows his retreat where he haunts, and saws the tree near the root nearly through, save that he may find it standing. And when the wretch comes to his support as he used to do, he is deceived and falls to the ground crying piteously. Then is it the nature of the elephant to aid him who is fallen, so they come and put their trunks under his back and raise him by great strength and save their companion from danger. Please God that were so amongst people! Let an innocent man of great goodness and good reputation come and provide himself with the support of a good name, which is worth more than any treasure, as says Jesus Sirach : ‘Have regard to thy name ; for that shall continue with thee above a thousand great treasures of gold’ [Ecclesi. xli. 12]. On this the wise man supports himself, but the Evil One comes, who through the envy that he has of his great goodness casts him, and undoes his support with a saw of his teeth, that God will destroy, as says the prophet : ‘Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth’ [Ps. lviii. 6].

And many a wise man and good woman falls into great loss through slander. ‘He imagineth how to throw thee into a pit’ [Ecclesi. xii. 16].

But then other neighbours ought to do as the elephants do with their companion—relieve his [hunger] or his loss by counsel, and aid by word

and deed, and as the Holy Spirit teaches, ‘Relieve the oppressed’ [Isa. i. 17].

But that they do not, but rather take [example¹] of mastiffs who are good companions in abbeys, but so soon as one is struck with a stone and begins to howl, the others all attack him. P., ‘For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded’ [Ps. lxix. 26].

74. That, in straits, a friend is seldom found.

WHEN the elephant goes into the desert, and his young go following him, if he sees a man out of the way, then he thinks directly that the man wants his young, and therefore, to rid himself of this man and to save his young, he draws off towards the road that lies nearest, to put the man in his way. And he does this, not that the man may not stray, but by trick to free himself, for if it goes well or ill, he acts only that he may be free. Such is the love of many folk, if they see a man, who may be cast down by hard chance, out of the way of counsel and comfort, come to the place where they dwell, but who cries not nor speaks of their default, yet they fear he may have come to have help out of their means

¹ Chelt. MS.

because they see him downcast. On which the wise man says in his book, Ecc. 13, ‘the rich abhor the poor’ [Ecclesi. xiii. 20].

And therefore they free themselves as best they can by ambiguity of counsel, such as: ‘Go,’ say they, ‘here or there, and thereby you will come right.’ So, let happen to him ill or good, they care nothing. Therefore says St. James 2: ‘If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead’ [15, 16, 17].

Here may be told how the ape begged the fox to give him the comfort of a share of his tail as a relief of the one, and advantage to the other.

75. That we ought not to seek higher things for ourselves.

A WORM, that is called in Latin eruca—but whose nature is to go above ground—spreads¹ two broad and delicate wings which bear him sometimes into the air in imitation of birds, but his flight does not last, and he soon falls back and comes to his place. Such are many on earth who

¹ Bozon’s text is here not quite intelligible. I have very slightly altered it.

fly and exert themselves to rise higher than their condition requires. And because they do what they ought not to do they are often repulsed. Wherefore says our Lord, ‘For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased’ [St. Luke xiv. 11].

Fable.

The rat did not wish to take a wife if he had not the daughter of the Sun, as the highest creature in the world. But the Sun told him that he should go to the Cloud as to a greater master and pray him for his daughter. The Cloud sent him to the Wind, the Wind to the Rain, the Rain sent him to a Barn, the Barn sent him to a Mouse, as to the one who was mistress. Then he came from high to low and descended to his place. Wherefore the Book teaches us great sense and says, ‘Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?’ [Prov. xxiii. 5].

‘Put not forth thyself in the presence of the King, and stand not in the place of great men: for better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the Prince’ [ib. xxv. 6, 7].

76. Against hypocrites.

THIS worm, called in Latin eruca and in English glowworm, has another nature, for he shines very clearly at night, and when he

comes into the light of day he is found a grimy animal. Such are hypocrites who shine clear in countenance : they will be found quite otherwise at the day of true knowledge. Wherefore says the Book, ‘ How is the gold become dim ! how is the most fine gold changed ! . . . ’ they ‘ were purer than snow : . . . their visage is blacker than a coal ; they are not known in the streets,’ Lam. 4 [1, 7, 8].

77. Against detractors.

THE nature of this worm of which we have spoken is to gnaw the flowers of trees and destroy the leaves. So do detractors ; they back-bite, and judge the acts of others, and condemn the good that they do. As to which holy Job said to his companions, ‘ Do ye imagine to reprove words ? and ye dig a pit for your friend,’ Job 6 [26, 27].

78. That no earthly pain can be compared with the pains of Christ.

WE see that those sweet waters which run through the land bear each its name according to the custom of the country, but so soon as they have fallen into the Trent, or into the Derwent, or into another great river, they have at once lost their first name and take the name of

the river. So I say to you thereby: if all the pains of this world, of which some are called penances, others illnesses, some poverty, others debt, some prisons, others afflictions, might be compared to the affliction of Jesus Christ that he suffered for us, they ought not thenceforth to be called pains according to their first name, but for good reason ought to be called comfort and devotion. As to which we find it written of many saints that, much as they were punished to death, they never felt such delight in heart as that time. Wherefore says holy Job for himself and for all others who attach themselves to Jesus Christ, 'It will be a solace and comfort to me that I have not spared to suffer sorrow for the love of God' [see Job vi. 10]. So said a maid in the land of Wales, of whom we find it written that she was so smitten with leprosy that the disease had taken away her nose, and the eyes from her head, and all her body was full of sores, and still she groaned and said, 'Alas ! that I am not worthy to suffer more for Him who suffered so much for me !'

79. That Christ will not be able to forget sinners.

WHOSO may have come from the court to see his friend in prison and comfort him would, on returning, be prayed, I believe, by the

imprisoned wretch to think of him when he should come before the king. And if the other should say to him that he would willingly do so, yet he would exhort him to make a knot in his girdle or some other mark that when he should see it he would remember him. But Jesus Christ, our sweet friend, son of the King of Heaven, who, through pure love and pity that he had for us wretched prisoners, came to visit and comfort us in this prison, and then, on his return, to remember us in the heavenly court, has us so dear that he will not knot his girdle nor wear a ring on his finger in remembrance, but from wounds that he suffered for us he will see a sign remaining in him that we were very near to him in heart—that his goodness may be very dear to us. Wherefore he says these words to us which are of great comfort to us, ‘Can the mother forget her child or for any reason refuse to have pity on him? And nevertheless if the mother forget her child, I can never forget you, for you see here my hands in which you are written. And I am so jealous for your salvation that you are always before my sight.’ Here lies a tale.

Tale to the same.

A holy man who was called Carp¹ had converted a heretic to the faith of Holy Church.

¹ Query ‘Polycarp.’

And while he was out of the country he returned to infidelity, by advice of a bad man. About which holy Carp was so grieved and ill at ease that he prayed to God that he might take vengeance on them. And in a short time he thought that he saw hell open, and these two ready to enter. And he was so angered against their sin that he desired that they should enter. Then appeared Jesus Christ with his wounds all bleeding and said to Carp, ‘Look towards me and consider my pain, and understand at heart my grief, and what I suffered to save sinners. You take too lightly what cost me very dear. If I were able to die again, as I cannot do, at any price, my will would be to die for man, so great love have I for him.’ The holy man, after the sight, repented, and prayed God mercy for the others.

80. Of the pity of God and of the glorious Virgin.

A PRECIOUS stone which is called oyndre shows this marvel—that it is always [distilling and always remains¹] of large size. Such is the mercy of Jesus Christ, such is the kindness of our Lady, that always distils towards us [through works of piety¹] and always remains

¹ Chelt. MS.

great without being diminished. Wherefore Scripture speaks in their name [and says], ‘Drops of rain and the endurance of Heaven, who can know them?’ [see Ecclesi. i. 2]. That is to say, their greatness and kindness no one can tell ; their kindness in alleviation, and their greatness in endurance. Their goodness lasts always and their pity always distils, not only to pardon those who have sinned but those whom the devil would desire to trouble. As to which you shall hear now a case that will give you cause to praise Jesus Christ our Lord.

Tale to the same.

When King Richard went to the Holy Land, a knight of his company was infatuated with a lady in religion, until the lady was overcome through overmastering desire of this knight. One night she took the keys of the convent, as she was sacristan, and wished to go to this knight, whose dwelling was near their house ; as the lady had previously been devoted to God and to his sweet Mother and had a usage every time she passed before the cross--she knelt and said, ‘I adore you Jesus Christ, and I give thanks to you for my redemption, and through your revered wounds and your holy passion defend me from harm and from the infernal prison.’ When she had said this she took the keys, and opened the

door, and would go forth. Then the Cross stood before her with arms outstretched. And she was so inflamed with the temptation of the flesh, and so obscured by the shade of night, that she did not know what this might be. Then the image on the cross opened a hand, and held her so that she could not proceed, until the ladies rose to matins and found her detained. Then she began to confess her evil intent, and promise amendment. And the cross withdrew its hand. All who knew of this miracle praised God, as was right. Wherefore says St. Gregory, 'Very great is the mercy of God who disturbs us from sin.' That follows Hosea 2, 'Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns' [6].

81. That souls in purgatory are freed through masses and alms.

IF a woman be in travail and cannot have delivery, take a feather or two of a bird that is called a vulture and bind it to the left foot of the woman in labour, and from this feather she will directly find relief. This example is valuable for the souls which are in purgatory, inasmuch as no pain, save death, is comparable to the pain of a woman in travail, nor comfort to her comfort when she is delivered of a fair child, so no pain, except the pain of hell, can be like

their pain in purgatory, nor any joy meet their joy when they are delivered and have received the joy of heaven. But so long as their pains last they scream and cry and often say these verses, ‘Pity me, pity me, at least you friends.’ Seek then this bird that flies so high through love of long endurance by two wings that bear it—faith and nature; so take a feather of one wing and one of the other and fasten it to the left foot, that is to say, ‘Have masses sung and alms given for the passing of their sin, and through such remedy they will be delivered from their pain.’ As to which I will tell you a tale that holy Bede tells in the *Deeds of England*.

Tale to the same.

There was once a knight who was called Sir Yomi and was taken in battle by his enemies, and put in prison, and overloaded with irons, but no fetter could hold him long, for every day at the hour of tierce his warder found him unbound, and how often soever he was rebound, at that hour he was unbound. The knight himself and all the others that saw this wondered much at it. At last it was found that he had a brother in an Abbey, who thought that his brother was dead in battle, so every day at the hour of tierce he sang a mass for his brother’s soul. As to which, this sacrament will show to the body in this life what a

lien the mass holds on the soul in the other life. Wherefore says Holy Writ, It is ‘a holy and good thought’ to pray for the dead, ‘that they might be delivered from sin’ [2 Macc. xii. 45].

82. That worldly love soon vanishes after death.

LOVE in this life is like the love of swine. When a pig is dragged towards death the others cry, and squall, and follow until his noise is finished, and then each returns to his place, and never afterwards remembers him. This is no wonder in a beast without reason, but is wonderful as regards the great love of people who so soon forget their friends and relations after death, as you shall hear told.

Fable.

In the Deeds of Charles it is found written of a knight mercenary who, at his death, bequeathed his palfrey and his harness to his squire, and prayed him by the trust that he had in him that he would sell his charger, and have masses sung for him. The other promised him faithfully that he would do this promptly, but he did not keep his agreement. The knight died, and thirty days afterwards appeared to his squire in a vision and said to him,

‘If I had found you faithful and natural, I should not be so hardly used, but God has so ordained that for the thirty days during which, through your falseness, I have been punished, you shall be in hell everlasting.’ The other took it lightly, and held it to be a dream ; until, one day he was riding this charger in the sight of all the people who were present, devils came in the air, some in the likeness of bears, others of apes, and descended and took this squire, body and soul, and carried him away to hell, where he was always in pain. Through such case, executors who are false to their friends ought to be warned.

83. That many are good in one respect,
and *vice versa*.

THE nature of garlic is such that as much good as it does in one part, so much harm it does in the other. It is good for the foot, and bad for the head, good against worms in the body, and bad for the stomach ; it does good to the chilly, and ill to the hotblooded ; it destroys the itch, and nourishes the stone ; it drives out poison, and brings on madness, it purges the bowels, and blinds the eyes. And as much good as it does in one part, so much ill it does in another part. So is it of many. As much good as they do in one part, they destroy through sin in another part. An angel once came to a holy

man and said to him, ‘Come and see three follies that folk do on earth.’ So he showed him a well-mounted man, and the horse bore on its neck a long [pole crosswise, with which he would enter¹] a palace and could not. He showed him another man who made a great faggot of wood which he wished to carry and could not, so put more to it, and then could worse carry it. Then he showed him the third folly, a man planted plants with one hand and tore them up with the other. Thereon said the holy man, ‘Now have I seen three wonders not without folly; I would willingly know what this means.’ The angel said, ‘The first signifies great lords who wish, at all events, to have their will foremost, and with such will, think to enter the Kingdom of God, and they will fail, for it becomes them to abase [their excessive self-will, to serve God¹]. The other signifies those who are of evil life and each day grow more and more [so¹], and the more sins they add on the more punishment will be imposed. The third signifies those who are changeable in their ways: now they do good, now evil, now they pray to God, now they curse their neighbours; one day they go on pilgrimage, another day to do harm they give farthings to poor folk, and take marks wrongfully; they refuse ale or wine one day, and another day are drunk; refuse their wives on Friday, and take their neighbours’

¹ From Chelt. MS.

on Saturday. Wherefore says Solomon, ‘ When one buildeth, and another pulleth down, what profit have they then but labour?’ [Ecclesi. xxxiv. 23].

84. ‘That saints, and those to be saved, are tried through various adversity.

PEPPER is a good grain, and black outside, and white within, small to the view, but great in virtue. While whole it seems of no strength, but when bruised, then its virtue may be found. So was it formerly of holy folk : as to outward seeming they were desppicable, but as to virtue of soul they were delectable. And others would not think this when they saw them whole, but when they were crushed by death—some through martyrdom, others through long penance for love of God—then were they found pungent and virtuous who had appeared desppicable. Wherefore the holy Spirit says to us, ‘ Despise no man in strange guise.’ This, an adventure in the land of Greece shows us.

Fable.

There was once a King who much honoured poor folk, for which a great lord blamed him one day, and said that he did great dishonour to himself in that he so much honoured them. The King answered nothing at that time, but privately

had two chests made, one with painting outside, the other of new board that he had filled with spices and with gems, and he left the other empty. So he put him to his election which he would choose. The other was taken by the external beauty, on which said the King, ‘ You are deceived, in good faith ; you think,’ added the King, ‘ that richness is full of good, and poverty full of trash, but I tell you that poverty is full of honey, and richness full of gall.’

85. Of weighing human frailty and liberality of heart.

THE noble clerk Avicenne tells us in his book that glass and wine mixed expel the stone. Glass is frail, wine is sweet, and stone is hard. Glass that is so frail signifies the frailty of this life ; wine that is so sweet signifies the sweetness of heaven ; and by the disease of the stone we should understand hardness of heart that ought indeed to be driven out if we think how frail is this life, and how sweet is the joy of heaven that is granted by God to those who are great of heart. Wherefore said our Lord, ‘ Give, and it shall be given unto you’ [Luke vi. 38]. That is to say, ‘ Give freely of that which you have, and you shall have the joy of heaven for reward.’

Tale to the same.

A knight once would spur a war-horse, and the horse was headstrong, and carried him over a rock and killed him. But before he gave up the ghost he lay long in a trance, and saw his judgment, and said these words : ‘Blessed be great heart.’ And thereby the others that heard the words understood that through these words he was saved.

86. Of the remedy against sin.

IF one be stung by a serpent, or bitten by a dog, let him take rue, and water, and salt, and the kernel of nuts, and make a confection of these things, and drink it with wine, and he will find cure. So I tell you especially, if a man be poisoned through mortal sin by the devil, let him take rue—that signifies contrition—and some water, which drives out venom—that is true confession—and salt, which is penance according to discretion—and the kernel of nuts, which signifies the sweetness of the passion of Jesus Christ, by which one may be saved if he takes it with wine of good devotion, as you shall hear through a case which happened in the city of Rome.

Tale to the same.

There was a man who had a barren wife, until through prayers and alms she conceived a child like the father in face but not in goodness. For directly he was grown up his father entered religion, and afterwards he begot a child on his mother. It happened that the Pope was sick, and the devil came in the likeness of a physician and offered to heal him. The Pope answered that he relied more on this woman, and on her prayer than on all his skill. ‘Forsooth !’ said the other, ‘you are deceived, for she is bad, and a lecher, and has conceived a child of her son, and therefore has killed this child with her own hands.’ The Pope wondered ; and had her summoned, and she heard the accusation, and took respite of three days. And within this time she was repentant of these sins, and was confessed, and did penance. And then she betook herself thither. Then said the Pope to the Devil who seemed a physician : ‘Of what do you wish to accuse her ?’ The other replied that he had no knowledge of her. And in sight of all the people the Devil went away, and carried off a great part of the house. Now see what virtue confession has which comes of true repentance of heart. ‘Declare thou, that thou mayest be justified’ [Isa. xliii. 26].

87. That the vanity of the world is despised by the wise, and embraced by the foolish.

THE cider apple is of such nature that near the rind outside it is sweet enough to taste, but the deeper in the more bitter it is. So is it of the vanity of the age and of the world. It pleases many at the beginning, but the more it is chewed so much the more bitter is it found, oil to the wise, tedium to the foolish. Wherefore said a wise man, ‘World ! world ! who reckons you well, loves you little, and counts you little.’ St. James well perceived this who says, ‘the friendship of the world is enmity with God ; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God’ [James iv. 4].

88. Against greed.

THE nature of the onion is such that it begets thirst in the mouth, inflation of the body, ache in the head, tears to the eyes, horrible dreams when sleeping, sweat in waking, and little nourishment to him who eats it. Such is greed for earthly gain. For first it gives thirst, as ‘more have, more want.’ To those said Solomon : ‘They are never satisfied.’ Then it makes a man puffed up by grandeur of heart towards his neighbours as

says St. Paul of such : ‘ They are puffed up, their head pains through toil and thought, their eyes shed tears through much watching, dreams sleeping, sweat working, and little profit is there in speech.’¹ Wherefore says Solomon, ‘ All the days of their life they live in sorrow, and get no other good save work without reward’ [Cf. Ecc. ii. 23, 22]. And the reason is because they look not to the life which is to come, but all to gain that cannot last. As the peasant did who sowed beans and threw a handful into the ground and said in his English, ‘ On yis ne trist I me nout,’ and another handful he tossed into his mouth and said, ‘ Yis I have now y-bouth.’² That which they sow in alms for God is, in their opinion, lost, because they have not recompense at once, but they get labour and pains for reward, and this is very harmful loss.

89. That self-will is to be avoided.

IN the land of Babylon grows a tree of ebony which resembles self-willed people, for it will not grow elsewhere than there. And if perchance it be removed and planted elsewhere it will never

¹ Query this quotation, the Latin text of which is not given by Bozon.

² M. Paul Meyer in his Introduction to *Les Contes* renders these words into English as, ‘ This I have now bought.’ But, with deference, I suggest ‘ y-bouth’ = ‘ in belly’ from German ‘ Bauch.’

bear fruit or leaf, but dries up and vanishes altogether. Such is the way of some folk. If they can be where they wish and do what pleases their heart, then they will do it well enough, but if their master wants to remove them or to assign another office to them that they do not regard as desirable they will neither bear fruit nor leaf, that is to say, they will neither do well nor speak well. And so all ought to know that the highest thing to be found is to give up one's own will to do the will of another. And this the Scripture testifies, that says, 'To obey is better than sacrifice' [I Sam. xv. 22].

Tale to the same.

A holy man once saw four orders in heaven, the fourth was more honoured than the others. Then he much sought an explanation of this sight from the angel. And the answer to him was that one order was of those who in their life had suffered poverty and disease in patience ; another was of those who had given alms and hospitality ; the third was of those who alone by themselves in the desert had served God ; the fourth was of those who gave themselves up in religion to do another's will. And because the fourth was in more trouble for God than the others, 'by so much,' said the angel to him, 'is it more honoured.' And the reason may be that he who humbles

himself most on earth may be highest in heaven. ‘For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted’ [Luke xiv. 11].

90. That heavenly joy is reached through many tribulations.

IN the land of Ethiopia a sweet tree is found growing that is called cinnamon, but great toil is endured before this shrub can be reached, for briars and thorns must be passed through before one can be at the place. And this labour is well employed, for the value of the thing. But no one is so bold as to work around this vine after the sun sets. This thing signifies the joy of heaven through its great sweetness, that sweetness tongue cannot tell nor heart conceive, as says St. Paul [1 Cor. ii. 9] to whom the joy of heaven was shown. And he who wishes to have it must pass through briars and thorns, that is to say, through enduring the pains and anguish of this life, for so says the Scripture, that Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when they were loved of God, passed through much anguish. ‘For,’ as says St. Paul, ‘what reason is there to grant reward for little labour’ [see 1 Cor. iii. 8]. On which I say to you, if a man were to work a thousand years in this life for one day in the joy

of heaven he would hold himself well employed. Then indeed ought one to work a little while to have this joy without end.

Fable.

A man of religion prayed God a long while that he would show him one of the least joys of heaven, until one day a bird came to him such as he had never seen, and began to sing to him. The holy man followed until he came into a thick wood where the bird sat on a tree, and the good man stood below to listen to this melody. When the bird went away the holy man returned towards his house. But he was unrecognised by all who were there, and all that he found was changed ; and he told them that he went out thence the same day to matins. The others asked who was the abbot at that time, and he told them, and when they had looked at their chronicles they found that he that was so had died three hundred years ago. Thereupon the holy man died, and went to God.

91. That the rich are impoverished through bad lords, and therefore they are to be avoided.

HE who has too much hair and wishes to be relieved, let him take thistle juice, and moisten his head, and he will find relief at will. So

I tell you he who is over-burthened with chattels or worldly goods, or money, let him seek the love of a wicked lord and his acquaintance, and he will be disburthened. Wherefore says the wise man, ‘Be ye not acquainted with the rich man’ [see Ecclesi. xiii. 2], for the more you give him the more he will trouble you.

Fable.

The Sun once caused¹ [the frogs] to be summoned to his court, and prayed them that they would provide a rich lady to be his wife. The others went to Fate and begged counsel of him where they should find a lady of such great wealth as to be worthy of the Sun. To this Fate answered and said to them, ‘You are fools and less wise than any magpie. For you know well that you are often heated by the Sun: if he be invigorated by your providing greater wealth you will be so much worse, therefore rejoice that you be no more troubled.’

92. Of chastity being held the
truest medicine.

WHOSOEVER has too little hair on the head and wishes to increase it, let him take the bark and leaf of the chestnut, burn them, and reduce

¹ A word omitted in MS. M. Meyer in a note refers to the fable of the Sun and the Frogs, *Phædrus* i. vi.

them to powder, temper with sweet wine, and make a plaster; and thus youth or maid shall have enough hair through it, as says the philosopher Isaac. So if you be young and wish to be seemly before God, haunt the chestnut, which means chastity, and take the bark, that is to say, have honest bearing abroad, according to the teaching of St. Paul, and the leaf of the chestnut, that is to say, let your tongue be chastened, without filth, or lewdness, as the Scripture teaches us, and burn them in the pure love of the heart towards God and the saints of heaven, and then reduce them to powder—that you be not puffed up by the good that is in you. And temper this with sweet wine, that you may have sweet affection towards others that are in your company. For chastity without charity, as says St. Gregory, is scarcely to be esteemed. And by this remedy you shall have plentiful hair—which means divers graces that make one pleasing to God as says Ezekiel [xx. 40].

93. Against bad prelates.

THE tree that bears large nuts also has large and very bitter leaves, and is of ill odour and worse taste, its shade is so dangerous that it is the cause of divers diseases to those who rest under it. Such are some prelates who have a

broad and very bitter leaf—that is to say, their speech is very bitter and they order broadly what they themselves do not wish to do ; they are of ill odour, that is to say, many are of ill-fame, and of worse taste in the mouth, for one cannot find ground for speaking well of such without lying. Whose shadow—this is the protection and governance of such—is so dangerous to their subjects who rest under them, that they give cause for divers diseases of sin, and of perdition.

Fable to the same.

Two priests were once companions, so that one on his deathbed prayed the other that he would make known to him his state after death. The other granted this to him. Then came he and showed his hand on which was written, ‘Satan, Prince of Hell, thanks the Prelates and Princes of Earth very much for the perdition of the people.’ And of this our Lord complains—that his people perish through bad overlordship. ‘They that rule over them make them to howl,’ Is. [lii. 5].

94. That we ought to honour that for
which we are much honoured.

MANNA is a herb from which the bees get matter for honey and wax. And they pay it such honour for the extraction, that if you moisten

the hand with the juice of this herb you may put the hand into their retreat without harm. And why do you not wish then to honour the thing that honours you ? The learned man is honoured for his learning, the knight for his knighthood, the craftsmen for their craft, but when wit is turned into folly, and handicraft to guile, and learning to wrangling, then each does great dis-honour to the state from which he received his honour.

Fable to the same.

A workman once made a very sharp hatchet, and because he had no handle ready, came to the wood, and prayed the trees that they would give it the accompaniment of a handle. All refused him. Then answered the hawthorn, and told him that he might take a branch of it. But as soon as this hatchet was handled, it at once cut off the whole tree near the ground. Then said the hawthorn to the hatchet, ' You had your honour from me, and now you do me this dis-honour ! ' So do many folk who turn virtue and sense to evil.

95. That God tries his own, and upholds the wicked, that they may turn.

ONE tries fruit if it be ripe, not only by taste of flavour, but by touch, if it be flexible under the hand. So does our Lord . . . those

who are flexible to his hand, and grumble not at the hardship that he makes for them in this life, are ever ripe to his eyes, and therefore he takes them. The others that are hard and sour he leaves to see if they will ripen—that is to say, be amended, as our Lord shows by the example of the fig-tree. But many are like a kind of fruit that is called miral, that first is rather sweet and savoury, and then, contrary to the course of nature, the harder it becomes, it is so much the more bitter and unsavoury—to show of some folk that the harder they are the less they are worth. We find of Solomon, while he was young, he was wise and gave himself much to God, but when he reached age he became foolish and gave himself to lechery and mahumetry,¹ and resisted, as many do now. And, if they do not say so orally, they show it in deed, and, to that extent, are like a kind of folk in the land of India who in their youth are bald, and, when they arrive at old age, have hair as children.

96. Against the covetous and unjust.

THE wise man Diascorides said, he who would boil the root of the thistle in water and drink it in the morning and evening, would,

¹ Idolatry.

through this beverage, be much inclined to covetousness. But, blessed be God ! there is no need at the present time to trouble much about this drink, for, one with another, they are very covetous. Of this our Lord complains and, speaking of it, says to the world, ' You that used to be righteous now are ye full of falsehood and of greed and of murder. Your rulers are faithless and the companions of thieves' [see Is. i. 23]. Surely he says truth. Thieves steal secretly, but they rob openly. . . . They do not wish to have the name of thieves, as was said once of a wool comber in the south country—a woman who was called, ' Leve in ye rokke,'¹ who was clever in the craft of wool combing, but would take no work of man or woman without taking and carrying away a great part of the wool, however much were given her for her service, on which arose a saying about her such as—

Leve in ye rokke ne is no thief,
Take oyer mannes wulle is hire to lef.²

So is it of great lords : they do not wish the name of robbers nor of thieves, but, through covetousness, are too desirous and grasping of the goods of another.

¹ Live by thy distaff.

² English.

97. That it is not safe with a
woman alone.

DO not approach a herb which is called colo-cynthe, when you find it growing by itself out of association with other herbs, for this herb is very poisonous and kills people. And so say I to you of a foolish woman, if you find her alone do not approach her, for you may be poisoned. We have the example of Thamar and Bathsheba and many others in the old law. Wherefore says the Holy Spirit, ‘Be not with a woman alone by chance, that you incline not towards her so much that you fall into perdition’ [see Ecclesi. ix. 9].

Tale to the same.

A holy man dwelt in the desert who was a very good man and of high life. For which the devil had great jealousy towards him, and caused a woman to come alone to him one winter’s night when the frost was hard, and the snow thick, and she began to cry loudly at the door that one would have pity on her for the love of God. The holy man had great pity, and feared to be accused of her death if he did not let her come in. About midnight when he arose to say his Matins, a thought came to him that he was alone with [her] alone, on which a very strong temptation

arose, until he was nearly overcome. But he soon returned to himself, and said, speaking of it to himself, ‘Try first if you could bear the fire which burns here, before you give your soul to the fire of hell.’ And he put his finger in the candle, and so great was the temptation that he burnt the four fingers of his hand before he calmed. The next day at matin came the officers of the devil by whom the woman was sent to deceive him, and asked him if no woman had come to see him. Said the good man, ‘Shame on her coming! Take her out with you, for she is not a woman, but is the evil one. Now see the reward for my kindness!’ And he showed his hand, and how his four fingers were burnt. Others came to the woman, and they found her dead. The holy man rendered good for evil, and betook himself to prayer, and so prayed God that, by his prayer, the woman was revived and quite changed her life.

98. That worldly joys displease saints and adversities please them.

THE leaf of the saffron shows itself green, and of beautiful colour in winter time; but when at the season of summer then it withers and casts its colour. Herein is a fine example. You should understand by winter the hardship of

this life. As to which, holy men formerly when they were in distress, made fair seeming, for the joy they had at heart, because they were able to suffer such hardship for God, and for the merit that they understood that they would have afterwards. But as soon as they come to those comforts which the age demands, then they change colour as did the leaf aforesaid.

Tale to the same.

We find of a holy man in religion that throughout the year no day passed that at some hour of the day he did not weep. One of his intimates came to him and asked the cause. The other answered and said thus, 'I have been in religion many years, and yet there was no year in which God did not dispense something special either of illness or of other trouble through which I had hope of great reward. But now, in this year, God has forgotten me, for I have felt nothing that should have troubled me so that I could have deserved the more.' Wherefore says Solomon, 'Sorrow is better than laughter' [Ecc. vii. 3]. It seems that God may be angry with his friends because he purges them in this life of their sins, and that he smiles on the others whom he suffers to have their will. But, as the French says, 'Mieux vaut ploure chant qe chant ploure.'

99. Against bad bailiffs and stewards.

THE ant-lion is a little animal, a foe to the ants, that enters into their garner and devours their store. And, through the destruction that it does to their food which they have got by great labour, the wretched ants die of hunger. Then the ant-lion, which is lion of ants, with belly full of plunder sits in the sun, and the kite comes and snaps at him and devours him. Then is he devoured who devoured others. So it happens to many folk who are in bailiffships. They skin the others to enrich themselves, and when they are enriched they are skinned by others. Wherefore says Is. the prophet, ‘Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled’ [xxxiii. 1]. ‘He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want’ [Prov. xxii. 16].

100. That those raised from naught much incline to injustice.

AMONGST the ants are some of such nature that first they are small and lank of belly, and then grow wings to fly, and they soon begin to be very harmful both to man and to beast, as says the philosopher. So is it of many

that first are small through poverty, and lank of belly through want, and then grow wings—two saddle bows—and fly around, and then first show their malice. Exod. 8, ‘There came a grievous swarm of flies’ [viii. 24].

101. That many keep hold of much, to the advantage of others.

IN the land of India are a kind of animals that bear the name of ants, and these guard a mountain where there is a great abundance of gold and rich gems, of which they have no advantage, nor, to the best of their power, do they allow others to have them ; but when the heat of the burning sun drives them to enter caverns underground, then come folk who know their habits, and carry away the treasure without their leave. So is it now of divers owners that keep their goods so fast that neither they themselves nor others have any profit in their lifetime ; but when the heat of the burning sun, that is to say, the justice of the Almighty, drives them, through death, to enter caverns underground, then will come others in spite of them and carry away riff and raff. And of these Solomon made great complaint, Ecc. 6, ‘A man to whom God hath given riches, . . . yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it’ [2].

102. That many nobles degenerate.

THE leopard that is of such noble race is very base in conduct, for, contrary to natural nobility, he is very fond of chewing and eating the dung that comes from man. So also the behaviour and qualities of many no more agree with the nobility of their race than gentle mustard does with its name when cried as gentle, and is made of sour beer and of horse-radish. Wherefore says our Lord in the Gospel, ‘If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham’ [St. John viii. 39]. But says the Apocalypse 3, They ‘say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie’ [Rev. iii. 9].

103. That the devil wounds many through mortal sin acquiring land unjustly.

THE leopard through the base love that he has for dung is deceived in such manner as this: for the hunter who lies in wait for him hangs, under a bough, a vessel full of such dung, and, while the other is working to get this base gain, the hunter gives him an arrow through the middle and kills him, and is the more encouraged. The devil also puts many a man to death through sin by the base gain of earthly possessions which is called in Holy Writ excrement, for it is more liked and

desired than is the joy of another life. Phil. 3, 'But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ' [7]; '. . . and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ' [8]. Lam. 4, 'They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets; they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills' [5].

104. That power makes many bold.

THE stag as soon as he feels his horns is very proud, but when he comes to the season that the horns must be shed, then he keeps himself low and in covert until they come again. So is it of bailiffs. While their office lasts they are bold and proud, but when it comes to the time that they ought to quit their bailiffship, then are they low insomuch as they are abased. Insomuch as they might say this verse of the Psalter, 'But having been lifted up, I am cast down and troubled'¹ [lxxxvii. 16].

105. That the devil deceives and seduces very many through worldly power.

THE leopard by craftiness and not through strength overmasters the lion, and in this way: he shows the lion a way under ground with a

¹ Vulg.

wide entrance and wide exit, but it is very narrow in the middle. The leopard goes before, the lion following him. When they come to the narrow part the lion can no longer advance but is held tight, and the leopard plays his trick, coming behind, and destroys him. So is it with the devil. He shows to great lords the nobility of this life, and promises them the nobility of the other life. But when they come to the pinch, then he deceives many, for then they cannot advance through the evils that they have done. Wherefore says holy Job 16, 'The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down' [xviii. 7]; Job, 'And the princes shall be a scorn unto them' [Hab. i. 10]. Note how the highwayman¹ cast his fellow into a pit and afterwards mocked him; so does the devil.

106. That confession is to be made oftener.

THE elephant twice a year goes to wash at the river and takes his son with him; thus he teaches [us] to do so. Well, then, ought man once and thrice to cleanse his soul by confession; as says the prophet, 'Wash you, make you clean' [Is. i. 16].

¹ Crassator in text; probably grassator.

107. That the words of many are
contrary to their deeds.

A BEAST that is called hyena has a wonderful habit, as says the philosopher Pliny, li. 8, for he feigns the voice of man or woman, and devours folk whenever he can catch them. Whereby he has deceived many folk by his voice when he is not seen, for he attracts them through the sweetness of his voice, but, if he can snap them up, this sweetness will turn them to grief. So is it now amongst people, the voice and deed of many do not agree. Their speech is sweet and pleasant, and their malice cruel and encompassing. Gen. 3, 'The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau' [xxvii. 22].

108. That the devil deceives many by
suggestion, practice, and habit.

THIS beast the hyena has another wonderful peculiarity, as the philosopher says, that there is no man nor woman on whom he has fixed his eye three times that at the third glance he does not cause to stop and, in spite of himself, fix his foot to the ground. So is it with the devil, he first glances with evil eye towards man when he goads him to wish to sin, then another time

regards him with a worse eye when he leads him on to the deed, but at the third glance he makes him stay and fix his foot, when he accustoms him either to lie or to steal or to do some other sin. Of whom scarcely 3 in 20 escape. Lam. He 'delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up' [i. 14].

109. Of the remedy against devilish temptations.

BUT from this same beast [from which] we have an example of evil, we may have an example of good, and a remedy of this evil. For his gall will much avail whomsoever can have it to remove the mote which deprives the eye of sight. So he who can and will take to heart the bitterness of the devil—how bitter is the pain which follows him,—will have the sight of his understanding cleared, and he will see his danger. Prover. 'The heart knoweth his own bitterness,' etc. [xiv. 10].

110. That the devil blinds many in manifold ways, and entices from sin to sin.

THE bear teaches us how the evil one leads people away. First, the bear is blinded through a burning pan placed before his eyes on

which he fixes his gaze too ardently. And, when sight is taken from him, then is he enchain'd, and tight bound, and then his master makes him jump at will. So does the evil one; first he places before people the burning love of this life, and through regard of such foolishness many lose knowledge of their own state. P. 'Fire fell, and they saw not the sun'¹ [lvii. 9].

Then are they firm bound, enchain'd by a pleasure of this world. So was Samson bound and blinded because he loved too foolishly, and immoderately, Judges 16. And then the evil one makes them jump from sin to sin. Apoc. 'He which is filthy, let him be filthy still' [Rev. xxii. 11]; P. 'They talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded' [Ps. lxix. 26]. And from sin he makes them jump into habit, and from habit into neglect, and from neglect into obstinacy, and from obstinacy into despair, and from despair into perdition. Wherefore says holy Job 18, 'He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world' [18].

¹ Vulg.

III. How the sinner ought to recover from sins.

BUT against this evil aforesaid we have a remedy by example of a little animal that is called lizard, the nature of which is such as that when he has lain the season of winter in a crevice of the earth or of some old wall, through long stay that he has made, a mote grows over the sight, on which he is very vexed with the place where he has dwelt. Then he goes seeking another retreat in some place in the sun, so that his eyes begin to shed tears, and the mote passes and so he recovers his sight. The sinner that for a long while has dwelt in evil life ought to take example from this animal to be vexed with his sins that have taken from him the sight of spiritual understanding; as says Jer. 4, ‘Woe unto us, that we have sinned! For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim’ [Lam. v. 16, 17].

Then when man perceives that sin has taken from him grace, he rejects the cause, as does the lizard, and seeks the remedy. ‘Awake thou that sleepest, . . . and Christ shall give thee light’ [Eph. v. 14]. Look boldly towards the rays of the sun so that the mote may fall from the eyes through the power of tears; That is to say,

Behold the works of mercy that sparkle so brightly from the brightness of our Lord, as the Holy Spirit teaches us. Ecc. 2, 'Look at the generations of old, and see; did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? or did any abide in his fear, and was forsaken?' as if he would say, no one; on account of which he adds because he 'is full of compassion and mercy . . . and forgiveth sins, and saveth in time of affliction' [Ecclesi. ii. 10, 11]. Note here the story of Manasseh who, after such sins committed,¹ prayed to God and was heard.

112. Against envious evil speakers.

THE bat has such nature that when he sees a lamp or lighted taper, straightway he sets himself to put out the light, but suffers more harm himself. So is it with the envious, they are very vexed by the fair fame of a good man, and exert themselves much to diminish that which they find good in him, but theirs is the harm, for they mortally sin, and suffer great torments at heart and deserve hell if they do not amend. Wherefore says the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet, 'Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; . . . as the fire devoureth the stubble,

¹ Query. Two words in MS. unintelligible. See 2 Chron. xxxiii.

. . . so their root shall be as rottenness' [v. 20, 24]. Note that the straw is altogether consumed.

Tale to the same.

For example of this it may be told how a covetous man and an envious man contended before a king. The first was to ask a gift which the king would double to the last demandant. The covetous man did not wish to ask, because he wished to have double, nor did the envious man wish first, because he did not wish to benefit the other. At last it suited the envious one to speak; he begged to lose one eye, through which the other might lose both. This is the way of the envious: to receive damage in order to damage others, as happened to those who, through great envy, accused Daniel. They thought to confound him and were confounded. 'The princes sought to find occasion against Daniel' that they might remove him, Dan. [vi. 4].

113. That remembrance of the Passion of the Lord is needful against devilish temptations.

THE philosopher tells us that the serpent so hates the stag that if a man has hand or foot fresh blooded with the blood of a young stag,

he will not thenceforth have to beware of serpents: Aristotle, li. 8. So I say further: if man having fresh in memory the passion of Jesus Christ, and the blood that he shed for us, sues grace of it, he will never have to beware of the devil. Wherefore St. Peter tells us, Pet. 4, 'As Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind' [I Pet. iv. 1]; and Isaiah 43, 'Put me in remembrance' [26].

114. Against boasters.

THE bear asked the other beasts, 'How do my paws seem to you?' I think that they said that they should not enter their trencher. [And nevertheless] the bear never ceased, after work, to kiss and suck his paws through conceit. So, many boasters, although their deeds may be of small value as to others, they never cease to have their own deeds in their mouths. This God disparages, and Holy Scripture. Wherefore says holy Job 31, 'If . . . my mouth hath kissed my hand: this also were iniquity . . . for I should have denied the God that is above' [27, 28]. He kisses his hand who praises his own deed, as says St. Greg., and Solomon says as follows, 'Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth,' Prov. [xxvii. 2].

115. A wholesome remedy against pride.

LET one who is proud of himself take example to humble himself, by the peacock that after being proud of his tail casts a glance at his foot and the pride is soon appeased. Apoc. 3, 'Because thou sayest, I am rich, . . . and knowest not that thou art wretched and . . . poor' [Rev. iii. 17]. 'Why is earth and ashes proud?' [Ecclesi. x. 9].

116. That the holy cross is a refuge for good Christians.

ATREE is found in the land of India, as says the book, of marvellous size but of still more marvellous nature; for it is never found without fruit nor without foliage. In it dwell a kind of doves which are sustained by this fruit, and below is a spring of very sweet water. A dragon that dwells in this land so hates the virtue of this tree that it never dares to be at that part where the shade is, but always withdraws elsewhere. And while the doves keep themselves within the liberty of this tree, they care not for the dragon, but as soon as they pass out of the shade they are at once snapped up by the dragon and devoured. And why has God put such virtue

into this tree? To show the virtue of this tree that God has planted in holy Church, of which holy Scripture says, ‘God planted a garden eastward in Eden, . . . the tree of life also in the midst of the garden bearing fruit,’ Gen. 2 [8, 9]. This tree is the holy cross by which we have life, that is planted in the midst to receive small and great, and the old and children. In this tree we find the fruit that fails not. Of which St. John says, I saw ‘a pure river of water of life . . . and on either side of the river . . . the tree of life which bare twelve manner of fruits’ [Rev. xxii. i, 2]. The river is the side of Jesus Christ from which issue water and blood, that St. John himself saw, in which we are imbued to amend our sins. The tree of life is the cross joining the river from those sides, that renders us fruit of sustenance and salvation. In the shadow of this tree dwell doves, for in the protection of his passion good men are saved from the evil one. The holy soul speaks of this and says, ‘I sat down under his shadow . . . and his fruit was sweet to my taste,’ Cant. 11 [3]. This tends to instruct us that another bird named a dove may rest in this tree, for the others may not do so; the eagle for his arrogance, the crow for his thievishness, the sparrow for his pugnacity, and many others that are not named, but only the dove dwells in this tree: this is the good man. Wherefore says St. Paul, Cor. 1,

‘For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness ; but unto us who are saved’—that is to us—‘it is the power of God’ [1 Cor. i. 18].

Fable.

The fox once said to the dove, ‘How many tricks do you know at need?’ The dove replied, ‘Only one.’ ‘One only is as none,’ said the fox, ‘and nevertheless what is thy trick?’ ‘Surely,’ said the dove, ‘when a storm arises, or an eagle or vulture comes attacking me, I have no other succour but a tree cross, where my refuge is day and night.’ ‘That is nothing,’ said the fox; ‘but I am well stocked with tricks. I have a bag quite full that was never yet dipped into, and also a pocket.’ ‘Forsooth!’ said the other, ‘you may want them all one day.’ On that came a hunter blowing a horn, with a pack of hounds, and loosed them at the fox. And the hounds ran round him everywhere, and began to seize the fox. Then said the dove, mocking him, ‘Dip into the pocket. I think that the bag may be tied up.’ ‘Nay,’ said the other, ‘it is torn, and all my tricks have escaped.’ Now let us bring this folly [to sense]. The dove signifies the simple folk that have no other refuge than in Jesus Christ, and that cross on which he placed himself for us, in each agony that seizes them. But the wise of this world rely

on their wit, that deceives them at the parley when that trumpet shall sound of which St. Paul speaks and says, 'For the trumpet shall sound,' etc., Thess. [1 Cor. xv. 52].

In this storm the doves will take their flight and will fly on high to Jesus Christ, as says St. Paul, and the running hounds will run into the fox. That is to say, the devils will accuse from all sides felons and cheats that have deceived their neighbours through wiles and craft. Wherefore says our Lord, that those who shine bright in the world through wit and craft the devils will have in ward at the last day. Job 41, 'Beneath him will be the rays of the sun ; he will strew his gold like mire'¹ [21].

Then the good will be able to say to the others, Take to your wit, and your relations, and to your wealth in which you trusted more than in God. 'Let them rise up and help you, and be your protection' [Deut. xxxii. 38].

Then one ruse will be worth more to the dove than a full bag of tricks to the fox.

117. Against the greedy and rich.

IN the land of Sicily a black and rough stone is found of a contrary nature. For, as says Isidore,² the more water is thrown on it the more

¹ Vulg.

² *Etym.*, book xvi.

ardently the stone heats. But if you put on it a little oil it is directly extinguished. And it appears unreasonable, for oil is nurse to fire, and water a stepmother ; but God shows it to teach us the way of many that have a heart so given to covetousness that the oftener they are immersed in earthly possessions so much the more hot and burning are they to have more. But when they come near the oil of charity they are always put out, and cannot proceed. If you touch them with a bag of wool [to sell cheap] or a weight-carrying nag, or other thing which may be to their profit, they will have the money ready with great warmth of heart, but if the poor beg a farthing for the love of God, the hard and black stone which is called gagates soon loses its heat. And this is marvellous, says the Book of Wisdom, that water should be lighted, that is to say, that one should be fired and inflamed through desire of earthly possession, by which one ought to be burthened, and can set such store by so little. But his profit is an enemy to him. Whose pity is always turned into bitterness, as a lamb was once turned into a dog, as you shall hear.

118.¹ Moral fable against the covetous,
and rich.

A MAN went to market, and carried a lamb for sale. Three rascals came following him. Said one to his companions, 'You say as I will say and we will cheat this man out of his lamb.' Then said he to the good man, 'Whither does God lead you?' 'To market,' said he. 'What to do there?' said the other. 'To sell this lamb,' said he. 'Lamb!' said the rascal. 'It is a dog!' He went on, and his companion came and interrogated the good man in the same way; and gave him to understand that his lamb was a dog. The third rascal came, and testified as before. Then thought the good man, 'Suppose my lamb be turned into a dog?' and he took his lamb and flung it from him and said, 'Go away from here, bad one, I will never bear folk mocking me for thee.' Now is lamb turned to dog, sweetness and pity into rapine, and disorder, and avarice through three rascals that are called Croket, Hoket, and Loket, and I will tell you how. Folk once used to carry the lamb of heartfelt pity to sell at market, to give and take, to give bread or money, to take recompense—so much per cent. Now come these three rascals and make them understand quite otherwise,

¹ *Sic*, in MS.

for the love of God which ought to extend towards others is through this Croket turned back to themselves, so that now there is scarce one that thinks of any other trouble save his own. And this St. Paul promised us a thousand years ago—that such an age would come towards the end of the world that the folk would be without pity, and each seeking his own comfort, and scarce any would do anything for another. ‘For men shall be lovers of their own selves, . . . without natural affection’ [2 Tim. iii. 2, 3]. Then comes the other that is called Hoket, and snaps up about him when he can, by right or wrong, each in right of his place, through false measure, false usury, or by taxation, or pledge, and the more he shall have snapped up about him so much the less will he have pity for another. Nevertheless many excuse themselves falsely, and say that the reason why they wish to acquire much is that they may be more able to give alms. But this may be denied ; as the more they have so much less they will do, and this can be seen by the example of the stag.

119. Against the rich.

THE stag while he is in a middle condition, neither too fat nor too lean, shows himself openly in the field, but when he begins to get fat

he does not wish to be seen, but keeps in covert. So is it of many, and particularly of the clergy. While they are mean folk they will rarely be found from home. But so soon as they begin to fatten through riches they will not be found at home. Wherefore says Solomon, ‘There is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches’ [Prov. xiii. 7]. And why so? As the stag, when fat, fears from each noise that one wants to strip his skin, and therefore keeps in covert, so the rich hide themselves from the cry of the poor in order to save their goods. Wherefore says our Lord, ‘They are waxen fat, they shine: . . . they judge not the cause of the . . . needy’ [Jer. v. 28]. Then comes the third rascal, that is called Loket, and bears witness to Croket and Hoket that the lamb is a dog, and orders that what Hoket and Croket have got through him may be so kept that neither God nor good man have share [in it]. And therefore says Solomon, ‘I have seen riches be to the harm of him who keeps them.’ And St. James shows us the reason why :

‘Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold,

the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth : and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton ; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just ; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord ' [Jas. v. 1 to 7].

120. Of exercising charity towards the poor.

WHO wishes to be taught courtesy and charity, let him look at the eagle, and regard its nature, that is so much to be esteemed that one ought to well consider it, and particularly the powerful man who has enough to give. The birds that live by prey and cannot well help themselves [know] by nature and by experience the great liberality which is in the eagle. Whence they follow him from place to place to be sustained by him. The eagle takes part of the prey that he seizes and leaves the rest to those others, and he has this liberality by nature ; except great hunger makes him, he will never use his gains alone without company. Such ought the powerful to be towards others who are impotent.

Wherefore says holy Job, that once was rich and powerful, to teach others, ‘If I have withheld the poor from their desire, . . . or have eaten my morsel myself alone,’ etc. ‘Then let my arm fall from my shoulder blade, and my arm be broken from the bone,’ Job 21 [xxxi. 16, 17, 22].

Tale to the same.

Amongst the miracles that are written, is one of a child that found an image of Our Lady standing on the ground in an abbey, that held her child in her arms, of whom the other thought that he was a live child, and held out to him his bread that he had in his hand. And when he perceived that he did not wish to take it, then he wept tenderly and said, ‘Fair companion, eat with me.’ To this a voice out of the image answered, and said, ‘Fair companion, I do not wish to eat with you now, but you shall come with me to eat, to play, and rejoice, after¹ the third day from this.’ The voice was heard by the people near, and they asked what it was. The child said that his companion had told him that he should come to play with him. And thereupon the child fell sick, and died the third day after. Wherefore I say, since God so glorified the child who did

¹ In the MS. the scribe has written ‘Apres’ with a capital letter, probably by mistake; the sentence should end at ‘this,’ and the next word begin with a capital, as altered here.

not know what he did—a little bread and charity that he showed to the dead image,—much more will he be pleased with those who sustain his own members, for when it is done to his own it is done to him. And therefore he will say at the day of judgment, ‘For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat’ [Matt. xxv. 35].

121. That some never do well in the present,
and therefore are drawn to hell.

THE pig while in life does no good, but keeps himself in idleness, and eats, and drinks. But the ass is at work all his life, and no gain comes from his death. So is it amongst folk. Some will never do good while they live, but eat, and drink, and get fat in body and goods in the world ; and then are drawn to the larder of hell, and then first others get some good from them. Through which I know that the folk that have put themselves into poor religion for God, will not lack sustenance while their Lord in heaven has his pigs to kill. For, as the good man before the season kills a pig or two to give the puddings and entrails to his children and to his servants, so our Lord will kill hard rogues before their time comes, to give their goods to the poor folk who are the children of God. Wherefore says the Psalmist,

‘Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days’ [Ps. Iv. 23]. And this may be for two reasons, because they do nothing for God, nor work to keep their body in health. For nothing in this life is worth so much for body and soul as well ordered work. As to which holy Scripture¹ describes work in this manner, ‘Work is the life of man and keeper of health ; work drives away occasion for sin, and makes man rest himself, is the relief of languor, a stay to illness, safety of the people, sharpener of all the senses, stepmother to idleness, duty to young people, and merit to old. Hence he who would give up the joy of everlasting life takes care, says Scripture, that he does not work at all in this life. Wherefore it is better to be an ass than a pig.

Fable.

A good man had in his house an ass and a pig, and the ass perceived that the pig was every day well fed and did nothing, and he was always at work and roughly treated. And afterwards he feigned himself ill, and lay on the dung heap. Until one day he saw that the pig was dragged off to death, and began to squeal and cry as the knife was put to its throat. ‘Forsooth !’ said the ass, and jumped

¹ The editors of *Les Contes* say there is nothing of this in the Bible. No Latin text is cited.

up, ‘it is better to work and save one’s skin than to be a little at ease, and then the knife.’ ‘Better weep to sing than sing to weep.’

122. Against cowardly subjects, and prelates.

THE nature of the snail is such that while they are at ease amongst companions their horns push out, and they deem themselves great lords. But so soon as they feel hail, or rain, or wind, or meet any resistance, they directly draw in their horns and shut themselves within their abode. So some prelates will do, so do the common folk. The prelates in comfort are bold, and when threatened hide themselves. Wherefore says the prophet Hosea 8, ‘When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel’ [xiii. 1]. The great lords threaten and the prelates fear, but towards the poor are bold and stiff enough. This said Daniel to the prelates of the old law, ‘Thus have ye dealt with the daughters of Israel, and they for fear companied with you’ [Hist. of Susanna, 57]. Wherefore said the sheep to the crow that sat on her back and tore her wool, ‘You would not do so to the mastiff that is called Griffin.’ And not only the prelates but the common folk are fearful of telling the truth; but when they sit in company and speak of the wrongs that are done in the country, or in religion by the

masters who have the others in charge, then they say, and promise that they will have amendments, if ever the place and time may come ; but when he comes that would be able to make amendments no one dares speak, but they do as once the mice did.

Fable to the same.

The mice held their Parliament [and complained each to the other] of Sir Bad, the white cat, who had destroyed their race, and exerted himself to destroy them. ‘What shall we do,’ said one, ‘with Sir Bad, who comes secretly upon us when we are in our comfort, and makes us seek the corners for fear of his arrival?’ Said one, ‘We will put a bell round his neck, and thereby we shall be warned of his coming.’ ‘That is indeed well said,’ said one to the other. ‘Then let us hold to that, but let us settle who will do this thing that is proposed.’ All said that the advice was sound, but no one wished to put it in hand. And Bad went on as before, and destroyed small and great. So many in company promise to amend the outrages of superiors, but when they see their presence, ‘Clym! clam! cat lep over dam!’¹

¹ English in text.

123. Against evil speakers and the unjust.

WHEN mule or horse is galled, or wounded at the sides, the flies go, and settle, and rest there sucking the blood. So is it of evil speakers: if they see man or woman who has many virtues and one defect, they go and settle on it. And what is the reason? Because filth pleases them more than sweetness, as says holy Job 1, 'Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth' [xx. 12].

Here lies a tale.

Fable to the same.

Maymound was so accustomed to speak evil that his master begged him one day, when he came from the fair and met him outside the town, that he would tell him no bad news. 'Nay,' said the other, 'I know none except that the cat is killed.' 'And how?' said his master. 'Your horse,' said he, 'was startled and stamped on her.' 'And by what was he startled?' said his master. 'By your son,' said Maymound, 'that fell into the fountain, and was drowned.' 'And what did his mother do?' said the other. 'Put fire under a pot and jumped up to help the child, and fell into the fountain and was drowned.' 'And who took care of the fire?' said his master. 'No one,' said the other. 'And what has happened to our houses?'

'They are burned to powder,' said Maymound; and lied at each word. 'I went off to meet you to tell the news.' 'Indeed!' said his master, 'shame on your mouth that takes such delight in telling bad news!' Wherefore says Jer., 'They have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity' [ix. 5]. 'The eye of the wicked is always to ill,' Ecc. 14 [see 8 to 10]. [The way of the fly is always towards corruption.] But the nature of the ant is quite otherwise.

124. That we excuse defects in kindred.

THE ant has such a nature that when she finds a carcase of a dead beast, if any part be putrid, or turned to carrion, she withdraws and eschews that part, and seeks the other part which is sound, she so hates filth and loves cleanliness. And this teaches us if we find defect in a man that may be excused, to eschew that part, and attach ourselves to the good that is in him, as says the wise man in his book of sense, 'The good man,' says he, 'turns his face and pretends not to see what he does see.' And because he is not sure, he says it not. 'Casting down his countenance, and making as if he heard not,' Ecc. 19 [Ecclesi. xix. 27].

Wherefore says Solomon, Prov. 6, 'Go

to the ant, . . . consider her ways, and be wise' [6].

125. Of the evil teaching of sons.

THE spider directly she is formed begins, through the teaching of her relations, to weave her web to catch flies, and is always working, always making it; but her work perishes through a little wind. So is it now in this new age. So soon as children know how to ride, they are sent to learn contrivances to catch flies—that is, money. Whereof said Is. 1, 'They weave the spider's web . . . their webs shall not become garments, . . . their works are works of iniquity. . . . Their feet run to evil. . . . The way of Peace they know not' [lx. 5, 6, 7, 8].

126. Against those who do harm to their next of kin rather than to strangers.

THE philosopher Pliny tells us in his book that there is a mountain near the Euphrates where dwells a kind of serpent of wonderful nature. For if one of a strange country passes by this mountain he shall never have harm, but if one of the same country comes by him he will soon be attacked. Such are now many in the world, that, if they have learnt any trickery by

which they can trouble people, they will assail their kindred and spare those who dwell afar off. And this is contrary to the teaching of St. Paul who says, ‘Let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith’ [Gal. vi. 10].

Take example then of the wolf.

127. That next of kin should be spared
rather than strangers.

THE nature of the wolf is such that he will do no harm in the country near him when he has just had a litter, but goes into a distant country to seek his prey, because he does not wish that his young should be harassed for his outrage. So let wise lawyers and pleaders and bailiffs do; let them be gentle towards their own country, and if they do not wish it for themselves, let them do so for their sons, that after their days they may not feel the wrongs that their ancestors have done. Wherefore says a prophet in the second book of Kings 7, ‘The law of Adam our first father wills that man should consider his children.’¹

¹ See 19,—but query.

128. That sons be well taught.

WE find it written that the philosopher Pliny says, 18, that the doe teaches her fawn to jump over ditches to save his life. So used good men of old to teach their children to eschew sin, which is meant by the ditch, where are found toads swollen with pride and envy, the snakes of malice and crime, the snails of cowardice, idleness, and indifference, the frogs of discord and cajolery—and they were accustomed to teach them to leap over all kinds of sin to save their life. So did Joseph and Jacob, so did Tobit 4, ‘Let not thy will be set to sin’ [5]; ‘Beware of all whoredom, my son,’ and let not pride rule in thy heart [see 12, 13].

129. Of avoiding bad company.

A RISTOTLE says in his book that if a foal be nourished on asses milk, when he shall come of age he will cast off his own nature and, through the nourishment of asses milk which he had received in youth, will attach himself to the ass. So many a man through foolish company in youth is shamed in old age, as happened to Rehoboam. Wherefore says the Holy Spirit, ‘Receive a stranger into thine house, and he will disturb thee, and turn thee out of thine own,’ Prov. xi. [Ecclesi. xi. 34].

Fable to the same.

The fox said to the sheep, ‘Don’t you like cheese?’ ‘Nay,’ said the other, ‘it does not come natural to me.’ ‘No?’ said the fox; ‘come with me and I will teach you to like a thing you have not yet tasted.’ ‘And do you recommend it also?’ said the sheep. ‘Yes,’ said the other, ‘in good faith.’ ‘Where shall we find it?’ said the sheep. ‘I saw a man carry cheese near a spring, and the man stumbled, and a cheese escaped from him and fell into the spring.’ ‘And how shall we have it?’ said the sheep. ‘I will go down in one of the buckets.’ When the fox had gone down to the bottom, the sheep asked, ‘Why do you stay so long?’ ‘The cheese,’ said the other, ‘is so big that I must have help. Jump,’ said he to the sheep, ‘into the other bucket and we shall have it directly.’ ‘Here I am,’ said the sheep descending in the bucket. And the fox came up in the other rising bucket, sprang to land, and said laughing to the sheep, ‘Is the cheese good and tasty?’ ‘Forsooth!’ said the other, ‘shame be on you from God! ’

Was it nevere my kynd
Chese in wellez grond to finde.¹

Wherefore said Solomon, Prov. i, ‘If sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us,’ etc. [10, 11].

¹ English in text.

130. Against ambitious and unjust Judges,
and the perverse.

THE philosopher Pliny tells us in his book that the ass, never, by his own will, without force from man, will ascend to cross a bridge where he can see through the middle of the bridge water running underneath—so much does he fear danger. And, please God, that our laity and our clergy and simple folk, might have such regard to the peril of their souls, who, without any enforcement, jump forward to pass the dangerous bridge, to rise into a bailiffship, or to be of the prelacy, and regard not the danger that is below. Of which peril the book of Wisdom 8 speaks, and says, ‘Who is highest in dignity shall have most punishment after his death, if he be not better advised. Hearken,’ says it, ‘ye that have the people in ward and delight in your wardship, that false judgments may not be given by those that have control.’¹ As to that, Jesus Sirach teaches us sense, and says, ‘Seek not to be a judge, . . . Bind not one sin upon another; for in one thou shalt not be unpunished,’ Ecc. 7 [Ecclesi. 6, 8]. But because St. Paul says that power and governance is from God [see Rom. xiii. 1], I recommend each wise man to consider that he should not push

¹ Query vi. 1, 4.

himself forward unless God has provided that he may, that he does it according to God, and minds the example of the lion.

Fable to the same.

A lion once wished to rest, and a mouse came and waked him. Then said the lion to the mouse, ‘Away ! lest I kill you !’ ‘That,’ said the other, ‘would be little prowess in you.’ ‘True !’ said the lion. ‘Go away from here, be forgiven.’ The mouse went away, and the lion slept. The following day it so happened that the lion was taken in a pit, the mouse came and found him groaning and complaining piteously. Then said the mouse, ‘You did me kindness, and I will save your life.’ And he gathered together his companions and gnawed the cords of the net with which the pit was covered, and they instructed him how he should break the cords and escape. So is it with great lords, prelates, and officers who have rule on earth, if they spare others while their power and their office lasts they will, through this, be helped when they shall have need. Wherefore says our Lord, M. 3, ‘Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy ’ [Matt. v. 7].

131. That bad servants do badly what they are ordered against their will.

THE wise man Pliny tells us in his book 28, c. 11, that the ass has such a nature that he much dislikes to wet his feet. And, if obliged to cross water, he makes some into the water before crossing it. So with some servants; much against their will they will do something imposed on them. And if they have to do it, they will do it in such a way that it were better that it were undone. Such servants are spoken of in the book of Kings 19. Mephibosheth says to David, 'My servant deceived me . . . and he hath slandered me' [2 Sam xix. 26, 27]. This is the way of bad servants who do not wish to do what they ought to do, and may be blamed by their master. They accuse their lord and say that he is too contrary and hard, as once happened between the oxen and their master.

Fable.

There was once a good man who made his oxen draw the dung out of the byre. The oxen grumbled at this, and said to their lord, 'You ill repay the bread and ale that you have through our work, when you have burthened us with such labour as this.' 'But, sweet friends, by whom was

the oxhouse filled with dung ?' 'By us,' said the others to him, 'we cannot deny it.' 'Is not this then reason,' said the lord to them, 'that you should clear it ?' Therefore I say let no one be ashamed of serving, as says St. Paul, 'Art thou called being a servant ? care not for it ; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather'—service, according to the gloss. For, as says St. Paul, 'he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman ; he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant' [I Cor. vii. 21, 22].

132. Against those eagerly amassing for heirs, and of the ingratitude of heirs.

A RISTOTLE speaks in his book 5 of the nature of the ass, and says that he is so fond of his young foal that he will go through fire before he will absent himself from him. And I can truly say that there are enough of those who put themselves into the fire to burn in order to enrich their heirs, and are not satisfied to leave to their heirs what their father left them, unless the heritage be doubled, however it may be got. Whereby they go into fire for their heirs, or their heart is first burnt up, then they pass into the fire where the body is burnt together in fire everlasting, body and soul, all without end. The first fire is thought, that burns the heart at once : for day and night

are they in thought how they can increase their goods. Of this fire Solomon speaks and says, The fire says, nothing there may be suffices for me. ‘Fire never says “it is enough,”’ that is to say, ‘avarice,’ according to the gloss. The more a man shall have, the more he will desire, and so will be in greater pain of thought. Wherefore says the holy Spirit, ‘For all his days are sorrows, . . . yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night’ [Ecc. ii. 23]. The other wastes the body, and this is overwork which burns and destroys nature. As says Job 32 of covetousness, ‘it is a fire that consumeth to destruction’ [Job xxxi. 12]. The third fire is the fire of hell where many burn in body and soul for love of their heirs, as says holy Job 21, ‘The flesh shudders from fear when I see man raised up through riches and his goods out of his power, his child shall rejoice and he shall burn in hell’ [see 6-13?]. And those are well compared to the ass for their folly, for he is a fool who himself is shamed in body and soul for his son, since sons are so unnatural to father and to mother, as is seen from day to day. And this one can see by example of how the lion, and the foal, and the goat divided their prey.

Fable to the same.

The lion took a calf; and said to his fellows, ‘A third part belongs to me by reason of lord-

ship, the other part belongs to me because I took it. Now it is for us to fight for the third part. 'Nay,' said the others—the goat and the foal—'let it be yours altogether without any division.' So is it of many heirs when they are made executors of their father, and have fellows, two simple towns-folk. 'Let us fulfil,' says he, 'the will, and give to each that which belongs to him.' 'The third part,' says the heir, 'is mine by law of the land, the other part our children's, the third that belongs to the soul we must hold for plea and argument.' 'Forsooth,' say the simple folk, 'let it be yours altogether, we know little or nothing of pleas.'

133. That intent be ordered aright and flattering or disparaging words be disregarded.

ARISTOTLE says, 8, that the crow through malice seeks to hurt the ass, and wishes above everything to pick out his eyes with his beak. But God has given the ass great help from his eyebrows, the skin of which is so thick, and the eyes seated so deep in his head, that when the crow makes at him he shuts his eyes, and chuckles his head, and thereby saves his sight, and secures himself from him. Here is a fine lesson to keep our intent good and well ordered, that the devil,

who is meant by the crow, exerts himself above everything to take away good intent from good folk. ‘When thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light,’ Luke xi.; ‘but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness’ [34]. Wherefore ought every wise man, in his good deeds, to save his intention from the beak of the devil, let him not seek praise from false flatterers, nor cease from his well-doing for any slanderous tongue. For who sets his mind on the tongue of another has now praise now blame, as says St. Bernard, according as he pleases the speaker. Whereof Jesus Sirach tells us that he who regards folks’ speech loses rest at heart. ‘Whoso hearkeneth unto it shall never find rest’ [Ecclesi. xxviii. 16]. For no one can please all; if he [is] quiet and natural in hall, then is he held particular or haughty; if he is affable and amusing, braggart or boaster; if he eats little and drinks little, then is he fastidious or dainty; if he eats well and drinks well, then he is a glutton, or extravagant; if he is liberal or generous, then is he foolish or too lavish; if he always considers about a gift, then is he avaricious or too stingy; if, for the sake of peace, he lets his property go, then is he bankrupt, or of no means. Wherefore one knows not how to live, so perverse is the age, but let us do as once did a man of whom you shall hear.

Fable to the same.

A man once came riding his ass from market, and his son followed on foot. And he was criticised for this by some who passed by the way. When he heard them he wished to escape their talk, so got down. ‘Get up,’ said he to his son, ‘and I will go afoot.’ But nothing availed him, for he was at once criticised by others. He would try a third way, and made his son get down, and led his horse by hand. But thereby he still could not escape, for it was said that he was so afraid of the ass that he dare not mount it. He thought that he would again try if he could, in another way, escape their talk, so he himself and his son together mounted the ass, but did not escape at all thereby; it was said that it was cruel when the ass was loaded with two men. ‘Now I know not,’ said he, thinking, ‘how to try in any other way to escape the tongue of fools if I cannot carry the ass on my back. May he be cursed,’ said he, ‘that would care to do it for their talk. Let each say what he likes.’ So say I on that. Let us not care for what another says while we have our intention [good and sound]. Wherefore says the Holy Spirit], ‘Winnow not with every wind . . . for so doth the sinner that hath a double tongue,’ Ecc. 5 [Ecclesi. v. 9]. ‘Through a double tongue’—one of slander and another of cajolery—

is ‘a man tried,’ which he is, firm or flexible. Wherefore, ‘Be stedfast in thy understanding ; and let thy word be the same’ [10].

134. That we mind not the acts of others
but weigh our own acts.

THE nature of the hare is such that he sees better and more clearly aside than before him ; and the more firmly he fixes his sight sideways, so much the sooner mishap meets him. So is it with many folk. They have a clear side-sight to see the misdeeds of another, but they do not see at all in front of them their own deeds that they have done, of which they take little heed. Wherefore says Solomon, A false balance and weight is despised by God. That is to say, Who makes the burthen of another too much and his own too little, God through his righteousness says to him, ‘Away !’ Proverbs 20, ‘divers weights and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the Lord’ [10]. This causes one to err, and make light of his own act, who takes more care of the acts of another than of his own. Wherefore I would that each one did as did once the brothers who compiled concordances. Each took charge of the letter that was committed to him. He who had A had nothing

to do with B, and he who had charge of B did not intermeddle with C ; and so each letter of the ABC was delivered to different men, and each took his letter, and no one wished to interfere with the act of the other. Thereby they arrived at the noble book with which the Holy Church is much comforted. So would I that every one, clerk and lay, out of religion or in religion, might take care of the letter delivered to him, so that Adam and Alice might not intermeddle with Bartholomew nor Beatrice, nor Colin nor Colette with others, save each with his own. But now you may say, of what use are the prelates, princes, and officers ? What have they in charge ? Ought they not to attend to others ? So they ought—not to condemn, but—to instruct, and defend, and save. Wherefore we have at the end of the ABC¹ \div *est amen.* The one title are the princes and the bailiffs who have the lay fee² in charge, the other title are the prelates who have charge of Holy Church ; the third title are the abbots and priors who have religion in charge. Those ought

¹ The editors of *Les Contes* here substitute from the Cheltenham MS. the words ‘tytil tytil, tytil’ for the mark \div , and explain in a note that there are often at the end of mediæval MS. alphabets certain signs of abbreviation, and that the Cheltenham MS. probably would indicate this by repeating three times ‘tytil’—the Latin titulus. But the application of the sign to the subject seems to me doubtful, although the meaning of the injunction is plain.

² Query ‘laity.’

to attend to their fellows to teach, and save them, not to ill judge them. Therefore it was said and commanded by St. Paul, ‘Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine,’ Tim. 4 [1 Tim. iv. 16]—to those acts of thine own, to judge and redress them,—to others, to teach, ‘For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?’ Tim. 3 [1 Tim. iii. 5]. The title serves for this,—[to save from false Latin ; when title¹] sits above, then that over which it sits has its right, when it is underneath it signifies falsity. So prelates, while they keep themselves above by right, save their subjects from evil report, but when below—who dare not speak through fear or gifts—then the subjects do ill, and many of them are lost altogether with those that have them in charge. Wherefore says a prophet to our Lord of bad prelates and bailiffs through whom the subjects are falsified, ‘Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous’ [Ps. lxix. 28]. Alas ! and no one may be saved except he who shall be found written in this book.

¹ Chelt. MS.

135. Of keeping wedlock faithfully.

ABIRD that is called cicoigne¹ is of this nature, as says St. Ambrose, that while his mate lives, he bears himself so faithfully towards her that he never flies far in the country, or out of the country separate from her, nor, on any account, desires to mate with another, and his nature so hates unfaithfulness that if [he] finds her with another, or can tell by scent that she has misbehaved towards him, never, from that day, has he anything to do with her. But while she keeps faithful towards him, then he holds her so dear that he puts himself in her place to cover her eggs while she flies into her country for relief. And, while she sits, he works around to get their food ; nor ever elsewhere, except within his nest, will he consort with her, and he is very tender and jealous to nourish the young that come from her. God ! what a fine lesson to man and wife, who are reasonable creatures ! Wherefore says holy Job, ‘Ask of the birds and they will tell you by nature what you ought to do through righteousness’ [see Job xii. 7]. Righteousness wills and God commands it, that this sacrament of wedlock be kept without stain, that one should consider place and time, and the meaning of this act, that each keep faith to

¹ The stork.

the other, for the sacrament is very high, and dangerous to violate, and for many reasons: first through him who ordained it, that was God himself; then through the place in which it was ordained, which was in paradise; then, next, through the time when it was ordained—before there was any sin. The fourth reason is that our Lord would not be born of a virgin until she entered the order of matrimony. Beneath this cloak God was covered. Ah! God! how purely this state ought to be kept that the son of God so honoured! and, in order to advance and enforce this honour, which belongs to this estate, God in his own person came to eat at a marriage where he, for demonstration of the reason of this, turned the water into wine; that as water by itself is tasteless liquor, so carnal act without marriage is mortal sin; but then is water turned to wine when the carnal act is saved by marriage. Then is he unhappy who leaves the good wine that God himself blessed, and takes to foul water. ‘And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?’ [Jer. ii. 18].

136. Of preserving widowhood chastely.

THE turtle dove is of such nature that, when she has lost her mate, she keeps herself chaste afterwards all her life; she withdraws her-

self far from others and does not want company, but always is bewailing the loss of her mate. Such ought widows, and ladies, and women everywhere to be who have lost their lords,—all their life after to remain chaste, particularly those that can do so without danger. For St. Paul says that she of right ought to be called widow who,—after her husband,—keeps herself chaste. ‘But if youth asks it, it is better,’ says he, ‘in that case to take a husband than, perchance, to misbehave’ [see 1 Cor. vii. 8, 9]. And it is wonderful that a woman dare take a husband again, for a twofold reason : if she had a good man before, and afterwards takes a vile, then is her comfort turned to sorrow.

Fable to the same.

As happened to a hen that first had a cock for her lord, who held her so dear that if he found a grain of wheat he carried it off in his beak and delivered it to his mate. The cock died in battle for love of his mate. Then came the kindred of the hen, and offered her another cock for mate. ‘Nay,’ said she,

I do not want a stay-at-home,
My husband was of such a sort
As, past his threshold, knoweth naught ;
He never roved, nor ceased to guard
The gateway of our own farmyard.

I cannot cackle why, although
The reason you may wish to know :
He knew not what to do on earth
Amongst the birds that are of worth.
So take me to the goshawk, he
Will be a lordly mate for me.¹

The goshawk agreed, not for her love, but for her chickens, of which he could have the benefit. The hawk sought his prey by the rivers of the country, and when prey failed him, a chicken could not. ‘What is this, sir,’ said she, ‘my first mate did not do so?’ Then first she saw her folly. So do women: when, after a good man, they take a base one, they have changed badly. If, after a villain, she takes another villain, then her trouble will be doubled. Then she may say, ‘Bad here, bad there!’ as he said who brought two foxes to sell, and whom the buyer begged to choose him the best. ‘Indeed,’ said the other, ‘I do not know any profit of the one, or pleasure from the other.’ If she be tiresome and of contrary ways, and takes a husband who is ill-to-do, then the country may say as happened once near my country, that William Worldshame married Maud Muchmis-chance. Wherefore, both in respect of God and of the world, it is a great honour to preserve widow-hood safely if it can be done.

¹ The Norman French verse is here somewhat freely rendered, owing to the exigencies of rhyme.

137. That those who wish to faithfully preserve widowhood ought to withdraw themselves afar from the sight of men.

THIS bird that I have named teaches widows again another lesson, she withdraws herself far from society, for she who gives herself much to society cannot long live chastely. And this our Lord shows us by the nature of two stones that are found in a mountain, and the one stone bears the face of a man, and the other of a woman. And while they are separated the one from the other nothing save coldness appears, but so soon as they approach, fire stirs in one and the other. So is it of man and woman, while they are far from one another they will only feel well; but now women do not allow themselves to be sought for where they stay, but go ranging about to offer their wares to town and country. Of this St. Paul complains and says, ‘They go wandering about houses, not only idle, but speaking things that they ought not.’ Wherefore, says he, ‘honour widows who are to be honoured, if they be as they ought to be and have witness of good fame, if they bring up their children well, if their hands be quite unspotted, if they do hospitality, if the feet of the poor are washed by them, and if they are accustomed to good prayers. Those may be called true widows,

for a widow that lives another life is dead, and without life.'¹

138. Of carefully preserving and maintaining virginity.

THE nature of the falcon is such that for no hunger that he may have will he ever descend on carrion, and because his breeding is so high that he has nothing to do with this filth, he often endures great want, but he waits and suffers until he can reach the prey that belongs to his nature. This example is good for women who give themselves to Jesus Christ in their youth, and fly so high towards heaven through longing thought, that for no temptation that can happen to them in the flesh do they wish to descend from this high estate of virginity, and unite with the carrion of man, and lose that dignity. They would rather fast, and watch, and endure pains and await their prey, that is Jesus Christ, than for joy, and comfort, and their body, through filthiness cut and lose the fruit in the flower that soon vanishes. So did St. Anne, Catherine, St. Cecilia, St. Margaret, Agatha, Clare, and many others.

Tale to the same.

We find of St. Clare that [she] was the daughter of a great lord, and, against the will of

¹ The Latin text is not cited, but 1 Tim. v. 3, 6, 10, 13 paraphrased.

her parents, put herself under the advice of St. Francis, and was the first abbess of that order of poor ladies, to whom such a case as this occurred in the city where she was shut up with her companions, viz., that the city was surrounded by their enemies, some of whom wished to enter the house of the poor ladies, to do harm, and misuse the holy virgin. St. Clare took the pyx with the body of Jesus Christ in her hands and said, ‘Jesus Christ, my dear friend, for whose love I have [cast away] all fleshly delights, be now an aid to me against this evil-doing people.’ To this a voice answered out of the pyx, ‘Fear nought, I am and will be with you, and for love of you will safeguard the whole city.’

139. That virgins are corrupted through
the counsel of shameless old women.

THE gentle falcon who ascends so high through nature, often comes down very low through deceit, for the birdcatcher who wishes to deceive her puts an old dove before his net, as a decoy through which the falcon is deceived, taken, confounded. So is it of the Evil One; when he perceives young women undertake to guard so high a thing as is chastity, he puts before them a decoy, an old dove, a bawd, through whom the young girl is often overcome.

Tale to the same.

So once was it with a damsel who had set all her mind on loving chastity, until there came a she-devil, hired by a priest who had a long while wooed her, and made a young bitch fast two days and then gave it bread and mustard to eat, and came to the maiden and sat near her. And when the maiden asked why the bitch shed tears, ‘Ah !’ said she, ‘do not speak of this matter to me !’ Then the other was more excited to know, the she-devil, weeping, said to her : ‘This bitch that you see here was my fair daughter, and it so happened that a priest desired her for love, and could not succeed, wherefore the priest died of exquisite grief. For which God was so angry with my daughter that he turned her into a bitch, and she wept ever after, and still weeps, as you well see.’ ‘Alas !’ said the girl, ‘I am in this same case through pure love of chastity. I have thwarted a priest’s desire. What now is your advice ?’ The wretch replied, ‘My advice is that you at once send to tell him that you will do his will in all ways.’ Wherefore says Solomon, ‘I have found any woman more bitter than death’ [see Ecc. vii. 26]. And true it is, for death only takes one life, but through a bawd’s act three are killed at once—her soul, and two others.

140. That the training of a son be laid out
in youth, and of those who never
wish to get on.

THE nature of the vulture is such that when he sees his young about to fly he drives them out of his nest, and teaches them in their youth to be tenacious and bold, so that in age they ought not to be idle, nor understanding only how to seek their food, but to tend towards merit, and prowess. So good men who have fine and thriving children ought not to let them be too long under their wings, but send them forth—one to one master, and another to another, through whom they can learn in youth that by which they may be fortified in age, not only to seek their food for the wretched body, as does the crow and the kite, but to aim at prowess and merit as the vulture. And where is greater merit than to conquer the Evil One, to gain the kingdom of heaven? And he who should get this prowess must begin in youth, for one cannot make a good house with rotten timber. Wherefore says the Holy Spirit, ‘Set your heart on good things while your youth lasts.’ And why? ‘I will tell you,’ says Solomon. ‘How will you find in age what you have not sought in youth?’ [see Ecclesi. xxv. 3]. But it is with many as happened once.

Tale to the same.

A good man sent word to his son to send some of his good ale. And he answered the messenger that his ale was too new. Another time he answered that the ale was too strong, and would trouble his head. A third time he answered that the ale was flat, and had turned bad. Wherefore I say many do not wish to give God their [youth, nor prime, nor] old age.

141. That some in youth soon begin
to do well.

THE bees do better; for directly they are born they begin betimes to do well, and work well; they seek flowers, and make wax, and honey. So the wise begin betimes to do well, and go to the flowers—these are good teachers—and there take the material from which comes the honey of sweet devotion, and the substance of wax by which holy Church is illumined through their conversation; and, because they know that death spares no one, they seize the time to work well while it lasts, according to the advice of St. Paul, who says thus: ‘As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men’ [Gal. vi. 10].

Tale [to] the same.

A GENTLEMAN'S son, in his youth, placed himself in religion, whereat his father was very angry and betook himself thither to destroy the house if his son did not leave his religion. 'Sir,' said he, 'I will do it willingly if you do away with a bad custom from your estate.' 'Certainly,' said the father, 'tell me and it shall be done without delay.' 'Sir,' said he, 'you have a custom on your estate that youths die when they become old men, do away with that custom and I will go off with you.' 'Indeed, fair son,' said the father, 'I cannot do this, for that ordinance is made by God.' 'Tis well,' said the son, 'therefore I have betaken myself to such a place as this to be ready to his will.' When the father heard him say this, he forthwith renounced the world, and placed himself in that house to serve God all his life.

142. That those who covet all lose all.

THE nature of the partridge is such that she [is] not satisfied with nourishing her own young unless she goes to steal the eggs of her companion. And when she has toiled about her own, and about the others which she wrongfully claims as her own, the fowler will come, set his gins, drive all into his tunnel, and take both;

he will let the old clackers fly, to have them in like case another time. So is it of many that are not satisfied with that which God has lent them, if they do not get more to it in a bad way. And when they seek great possessions and great lands, then comes the fowler—king or justiciar—and sets his gins of hard accusation, drives them into prison, and takes from them as much as they have got by right or wrong. And then, when he pleases, lets fly the old, or the others worth more, so as to find a case against them at another time. Wherefore says Scripture, ‘Who does harm to others to enrich himself, his masters will take from him as much as he has taken and so he will become poor’ [see Prov. xxii. 16]. As to which it is truly said ‘Who covets all loses all.’

Fable to the same.

Three companions went a pilgrimage on which they came into a town where there was no bread for sale, but only wheat, of which they made a cake. And they made a certain agreement between them that he who, when asleep, should have the most wonderful dream might take the whole cake to himself. And, while two slept, the third went off to the cake, and ate every bit of it and then lay down to sleep. The others arose, and told two dreams. One said that he thought that

two angels took him and carried him to heaven ; and the other said that he thought that two devils took him and carried him to hell. When they came to their companion and began to awaken him he showed signs of great fright, and did not cease to cry out. ‘What is this ?’ they said, ‘are you mad ?’ ‘No,’ said he, ‘but I am wonderstruck that you have all come back from so far : I thought that I saw two angels carry one of you towards heaven, and two devils carry the other towards hell, and I did not know what better to do, but took comfort to myself and ate all our cake.’ Whereon said the others, ‘Who covets all loses all.’

143. Of fools who always lapse from bad to worse.

THREE is a great difference of nature between the ass and the sheep, for the older the ass grows so much the less value he has, for then he becomes disagreeable, wilful, and quarrelsome, dry and cowardly, heavy and forgetful. Such are many who begin fairly, but, in growing, deteriorate. In their youth they are pleasant, good-natured, compassionate, devoted to God, and fervent in love, ready to all good, and of kindly remembrance. But in each point in which they ought to increase they decrease, for those who were

pleasant in youth become unpleasant in age, bitter through evil conversation. Gal. 3, 'Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?' [3]. Those that were good-natured become as the ass, wilful and quarrelsome, that is to say, angry of heart and troublesome to others. Wherefore says Isaiah 53, 'Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water' [i. 22]. Those who were compassionate become hard, those who were fervent become cowardly and disobedient. Of those St. Paul speaks and says, Th. 3, 'For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, . . . disobedient' etc. [2 Tim. iii. 2]. And the last state of the ass which is so forgetful, shows us the state of fools, which is very dangerous. For the nature of the ass is to [forget] where he was last in peril, nevertheless he will not give up returning there again. Wherefore says Solomon, Ecc. 8, 'And if the bad man returns to his sin a hundred times because he is not gainsaid, I say to him that it will be well with him if he withdraws for fear of God' [viii. 12¹].

Tale to the same.

The lion lay sick, and the beasts came to visit him. The fox judged his water and said, 'If he might have an ass's heart he would be cured.'

¹ This is not an exact rendering of the verse referred to, and Bozon does not give the Latin text.

The ass was called, and ordered to be killed. Whereon the ass begged that he might go home to make his will, and pledged himself to return ; but he would not. When the fox saw that he did not return, he applied himself to him through his sureties, and brought him back. The ass was soon killed and flayed, opened and undone. And, in undoing, the fox stole the heart, and ate it privily. The heart was looked for and not found, and the fox was accused of this before the lion. The fox answered to it, and said that the ass had no heart at all, and he would prove this by reasoning. Remembrance comes from the heart, and he had lost remembrance of his danger when he returned again to his death. Wherefore it appeared clearly that he had lost his heart elsewhere, when he had forgotten such danger of death. ‘He has said well,’ said the lion. ‘Return unchallenged.’ And therefore I say that bad people always go, like the ass, to the worse, and forget their danger, and always return, until they come to their end. Wherefore says St. Paul, ‘But evil men . . . shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived’ Th. 2 [2 Tim. iii. 13].

144. Of the good who always go on from
good to better.

BUT the sheep teaches us another lesson, to proceed by amendment, and not by deterioration. He is in youth amiable, but in age more exemplary, for then he shows us in his nature four things that we ought to follow. One thing is that he gives himself up to the company of old sheep, and refuses the lambs—as says the philosopher, c^o 4^{to}.¹ We also ought to go to wise companions, and not to young fools as did Rehoboam, Kings 12, by which he lost so much. Wherefore says Tobit to his son, ‘Give yourself always to the wise, and from them seek thy counsel’ [see Tobit iv. 18]; but guard yourself against fools, says Solomon, Eccl. 8, for they love nothing but what pleases them. ‘Consult not with a fool’ [Ecclesi. viii. 17]. Another quality the sheep has: the more he grows in strength the more he [spurns] the ground with his foot, and this teaches us the more we increase in age, to have the world the more under foot. Wherefore says St. Paul, When I was a child, I did as a child, I gave myself to the folly of the world; but when I came to manhood, I did as belongs to a man. ‘When I was a child, I spake as a child,’

¹ Sic, in text. The reference may be to Plin. *Nat. Hist.*, book viii. chap. xlvii.

etc., Cor. 12 [1 Cor. xiii. 11]. ‘I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ’ Ph. 3 [8]. The third quality the sheep has: the more it grows in greatness the more wool it gives. So ought the wise man, the more he grows in greatness, the more to abound in alms, as Abraham, Job, Tobit, and Cornelius. Wherefore says St. Paul, I pray, says he, that your charity and your good deeds may grow more and more. ‘And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more’ [Phil. i. 9]. The fourth quality the sheep has: that as he grows, and runs on in age so he grows in hardihood of heart through the armature that he bears on his head. So ought each good man as he grows in age, to grow in hardihood of courage to defend the laws of holy Church, or of the land. Therefore says the Apostle, Grow in virtue, ‘increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might,’ Col. 1 [10, 11]. But I can say certainly that the horns of the sheep are turned into the horns of the snail, as regards prelates who ought to show severity towards sin, and as regards the commonalty of the realm or church who ought to charge their masters with forfeiture sufficiently proved.

145. That many laboriously get riches and are mocked by those who consume them.

THE badger is a base and stinking animal, and seeks filthy prey if he can—as worms or carrion, or the fresh dung of sheep, which he loves much, for which he does damage to the folds, and they are so burning in lechery that in their rutting time they will indeed attack a man, and will give him enough to do. And they are animals that work hard, for they make their retreats deep in the earth with a narrow entrance, but inside they are large enough, and with many angles where they hide. And though it be a filthy animal, yet it is delicate, insomuch as when the fox, who watches them when they shall have it quite perfect, has made his dung at the entrance, they will never come there. So there are many wretches to whom God has given enough on which to live in honour, that give themselves wholly up to avarice and wretchedness, and think of nothing, nor delight in anything but to dig the earth and withdraw the dung of sheep, and seek chattels by right or wrong. And usually they are very lewd, for they hardly wish to take wives, fearing that they will make them spend too much. And although they be wretches, and of bad repute, there will be none who will sooner speak, and put forth ill of a

man, if they can hear of any accusation. And they think of nothing but getting treasure, and of having small and mean houses to save their gains, with a narrow entrance to the door, that neither God, nor any good man may enter to share their goods, and divers little retreats within where they may lie hid if any good man seeks them. And, at the top of all, it happens to them as it did to the conjurer.

Fable to the same.

There was a conjurer in the county of Leicester who came to the dwelling of a good man where there would be great gathering of decent folk that day, and secretly hid away his wallet with his tricks until the time. But two bad lads, Sterlyn and Galopyn, who saw where he had hid his wallet, took it, and did their filth in it, so that he would not know, and put it back. And, when the time came, the conjurer took his wallet and came before the people to do his art, and began common tricks by sleight of hand. On which they said that he played cleverly. ‘Nay,’ said he, ‘but there is still a trick in my bag.’ And he hastily plunged his hand into his bag to take his tricks, and withdrew it all foul with the rascals’ ordure, and so stinking that he could not stay in the hall, but fled, crying ‘Alas! alas! Sterlyn and Galopyn have done this trick to me.’ Whereupon there was no one in

the hall that did not laugh at him, and they said, ‘True, true, conjurer, you said well : there was another trick in your bag that you thought of.’ So the avaricious rich that cannot bear to give anything for God, nor spend in honour amongst their neighbours, when they shall come before the Lord of Heaven to render account of all their deeds and all their words, then will be as false, evil, stinking hounds cast out of God’s feast through the stench of the cash for which they trotted and galloped, spurred, and ran in this world, and others will make themselves very much at ease in what, perhaps, would have been hardly vouchsafed during life.¹ For which they will only have mockery in heaven and in earth, as says the Psalmist, ‘The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him. Lo ! this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness’ [Ps. lii. 6, 7]. And verily it is vanity by which man to his great harm is deceived and discomfited.

Fable to the same.

The good man John of Alderby, Bishop of Nichol,² showed to the Abbot of Gignesham² who dined with him in his castle of Banbury, a gentle-

¹ A conjectural rendering of doubtful words in MS.

² The editors of *Les Contes* shew in a note that the Bishop was of Lincoln, and the Abbot of Evesham.

man that he had there, and told him that he was executor to a parson who was dead, in the bishopric, and came to him for counsel to have administration. ‘This parson,’ said he, ‘was procurator to the Templars in the Arches at London, and had from them food at court for him, and a lad, and a horse, robes, and a yearly pension. And although he was promoted to a very good church, and he had good emoluments, he spent nothing but [put] all on the Templars so long as he could endure to go to the Arches. And when he could no longer, he went to his church, and dwelt there wretchedly, he never invited a neighbour, nor ate a good meal. At last on dying, he made his will that amounted to £300, and delivered to his executors the monies all reckoned. But at the end of his will he had this clause put: “But in addition to all these, eight remain under the chair.” But none of the executors knew what this should amount to, nor had he wished any of them to count them. He died, and his executors, understanding that the clause in the will was not written for nothing, privily searched all the houses, and found nothing except a chair that stood in a small, low, and dark room where his predecessors used to lay their wine in bulk, and which room in all his time had no fastening. Under this chair, digging quite deep, they found a chest with eight

thousand pounds of easterlings. "As to which he, who is the principal executor, has come to us," said the bishop, "to have advice what to do with this property." And the bishop said to the abbot in audience, "Eight thousand pounds! Eight thousand pounds, Lord Abbot, he had in hoard, and never could eat a good meal!" And when they heard this of his folly they laughed, and, advising his executor, said that he and his fellows should take the money, and make them and theirs rich with it. But the bishop ordained as to that for the soul¹ at his discretion, and charged the good man with it on peril of his soul.

146. That under the guise of virtue the devil often introduces vices.

THE hunter, when perceived by a fat and strong stag, never looks to his hounds or bowmen; he dismisses them, to take him by cunning, so leaves him entirely in peace without giving any alarm to him, and spies out where his track may be to his lair, where the stag is accustomed to rest, and goes there to put a trap secretly, and covers it, and scatters round the whole place ivy and cole-worts. Whereupon when the stag comes towards his lair, and sees the ivy, he stops and nibbles the

¹ i.e. for masses.

leaves, and bush that he likes much. And seeing before him the worts that he likes most, he hastens there, and tries them. And then he goes on trying now one now another, choosing what he thinks the better until, before he knows it, he treads in the trap and is so tightly bound there that he cannot help himself, when the hunter, who is not far off, comes and dispatches him, if he be not so strong that he can break the cords, and afterwards escape. So the Evil One, where he sees a man who gives himself wholly to God and to his service, sets¹ against him, by deceits and tricks, and, by pretence of holiness and of good, leads him to evil, and to sin. And where he seeks to do well he falls into evil without returning, if it be not for the mercy of God ; for the simple folk who scarcely know how to defend themselves against [the Evil One] have never a dainty to their dinner,¹ but the good folk and saints, and those who give themselves to the maintenance of the vows that we all take at our baptism, to adhere to God and his commandments, and to renounce from this hour forth the devil and all his works—against these he sets himself with all his power, as says holy Job : ‘ He drinketh up a river,’ that is to say, the great number of miscreants, and bad, false Christians who are cold and without charity, unsavoury through ill-doing, and always stirring through

¹ Word in MS. doubtful.

dissension, and he will not wonder, but still trust that the River Jordan, that is to say, the good Christians who love God perfectly, will run down his throat. ‘He drinketh up a river, and hasteth not ; he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth’ [Job xl. 23]. As to which Satan, their master, commands his ministers and says, Go against all mortals,¹ against great and small, and against those particularly that have me in contempt. You must not spare any region of the world but make all serve me. Judith, ‘And thou shalt go against all the west country, because they disobeyed my commandment. But concerning them that rebel, let not thine eye spare them ; but put them to the slaughter’ [ii. 6, 11]. Yet, as says St. Jerome, ‘he will be able to tempt us much, but not force us to do wrong : he can suggest, he cannot cast down,’ for the King of Majesty is so full of pity that he suffers none to be tempted more than we can bear if we will. ‘God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it’ [I Cor. x. 13]. Wherefore if we of our free will shall wish to follow him [the Tempter] he will lead us, as if through reason, and for our advantage, from bad to worse, as the cat led the fox.

¹ Another doubtful word in MS.

Fable to the same.

The fox met a large fat cat in a wood, and asked him how he was in such condition, since he was very hungry. ‘I have enough,’ then said the cat, ‘and so will you have if you will go with me.’ ‘Willingly,’ said the fox, and he feared no deceit. The cat led him next night to a town, to the court of a great lord, and asked him, ‘Do you not know how to eat cheese, and salt flesh?’ ‘Very well,’ said the other, ‘and with good will.’ The cat led him through a narrow window into the larder, and made him eat some salt meat well salted; then he led him into the dairy, and made him lap up some milk, as much as he could. Then he made him eat another salted cheese, and then lap some milk: ‘Now,’ said the fox, ‘we are right, it is well that we go away.’ ‘Not yet,’ said the cat; ‘we will eat some dainties as you are here.’ Then he led him into the cellar where they found fresh meat and fish, and he made him eat much. And when he could eat no more the cat again made him return to lap milk for leave-taking, until he was so big that he could scarcely walk: ‘Now,’ said the cat, ‘we are quite at ease, now we will sing.’ ‘No, please God!’ said the fox, ‘we shall be put to shame.’ ‘Never mind,’ said the cat, ‘but follow me,’ and he began to cry out as loud as he could. The storekeeper and the

deye¹ who heard the noise lighted up to see who it could be, and on their coming the cat jumped out of the window where he entered, and went off. The fox wished [to go] after, but in vain. He was so big from eating and drinking too much that he could not go forth, but was taken and so beaten that he was held for dead. So the Evil One by his tricks leads us from sin to sin, until he has us entangled in his trap and entwined with the cords of our own sins. ‘He shall be holden with the cords of his sins’ [Prov. v. 22]. But he does this so cunningly that we cannot perceive it. ‘They have prepared a net for my steps, my soul is bowed down’ [Ps. lvii. 6], that is to say, drawn to sin, for first he draws us to consent, and then leads us to do the deed, at last binds us by custom ; then he thinks we are his. For it is hard to break the cord where three cords unite. Solomon, ‘A three-fold cord is not quickly broken’ [Ecc. iv. 12]. But our Lord who made us, and bought us with his blood, who wishes all men to be saved, and no one to die in his sins, if we will cry to him and pray him for his mercy, when the devil has beguiled us and led us into his trap, delivers us from the cord, and takes us to him quite freed.

¹ The exact meaning of this old English word is obscure. It occurs in Chaucer’s Nonnes Preestes Tale. A ‘deye’ seems to have been some kind of farm servant, and is named amongst others in the Statute 25 Ed. iii. c. i., and again 37 Ed. iii. c. 14.

‘Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers ; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth’ [Ps. cxxiv. 7, 8].

As to which I will tell you a tale.

Tale to the same.

A monk of very holy life, with the assent of his abbot, betook himself to the desert far from any sight of man, and lived on roots, herbs, and fruits of the desert, and lodged in a hollow of a rock, and very perfectly and devoutly served God, and for many years saw no man. The devil had a great wish for him, and tempted him enough, but could by no art incline him to consent to any sin, until one day he came to him in the guise of a hermit, and seemed to the view very spiritual and devout, and said that he had long dwelt near, and that he much wondered that he had not seen him. And he said that he knew well that God liked their life, and therefore made them then come together, each to be comforted by the other. And he asked the good man if he kept all the observances of his order. The other said ‘Yes,’ except that he did not rise at midnight to say his matins. ‘And this,’ said he, ‘is because I have no clock, nor fire, nor candle.’ ‘No?’ said the other, ‘you do ill, I will let you have a cock that

will crow and awaken you soon after midnight, and I will give you tinder and flint, pebble and other instruments, with which you shall strike fire, and will do your duty.' And so he did: the cock crowed regularly, and the good man slept soundly until cock-crow. And then he rose, and afterwards kept vigil all night at his prayers. In a little while the cock refrained from crowing, and the good man slept until it was almost day, and lost much of his devotion. The bad hermit came back to him and asked him how he was. 'I am well,' said the other, 'but my cock deceives me sometimes.' 'Yes?' said the Evil One, 'I will amend him.' So on another day he brought him three hens to whom the cock at once attached himself. The hens laid, sat, and hatched, on which the good [hermit] had great compassion who saw the chickens—such innocent creatures—die of hunger. Wherefore each day he went with a dibbler to dig in the ground to find worms to sustain their life. The Evil One dropped in, and asked him how he did. 'Badly,' said the other, 'the hens now have chickens, therefore I am busy enough all day to find worms for their sustenance, and leave my prayers, and my devotion.' 'Indeed!' said the other, 'it shall be all right, and soon.' And he returned one day, and brought with him a young and fair girl, to serve the good man while he attended to his devotion. The girl

made the good man eat some bread, and drink wine that she had brought with her, so that the flesh which was dead in him began to revive, and rise up against the spirit, insomuch that the girl one day so beguiled the holy man that he was just on the point of having sinned with her. But God of his grace visited him, so that he thought of his state, and made the sign of the holy cross, and forthwith vanished the false hermit, the girl, cock, and hens, and what the Evil One had provided to deceive the holy man—for they were all bad spirits in those shapes. And the good man repented of his folly, and gave himself wholly to praise and serve God, and lived well and ended in the service of Almighty God, to whom be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

This book is written, may he who wrote it be blest.—AMEN.

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